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"SHE PROTECTS HER GIRLS": THE LEGEND  
OF MARY HAWKINS AT PEMBERTON HALL

ALLEN-KLINE

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"She Protects Her Girls":

The Legend of Mary Hawkins at Pemberton Hall

(TITLE)

BY

Margaret Allen-Kline

1949 -

**THESIS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Arts

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1998  
YEAR

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## **Abstract**

The tradition of the legend of Mary Hawkins provides an example of how urban legends develop and circulate in a community. The legend is a part of a larger tradition of story telling and of urban legends such as "The Roommate's Death" which follow the same format. The legend is believed to be true, and many believe an actual event is the basis for the story. It is perpetuated by word of mouth, and like a ripple in a still body of water, it reaches beyond the campus and into the mainstream of the local community by means of the print media. Telling the story serves many functions for students at Eastern Illinois University and especially for those women living in Pemberton Hall, the oldest women's residence hall in Illinois. The legend taps into rules of society concerning roles of women. It also touches on anxieties held by people from every economical, political, gender and religious affiliation.

There is a value in the telling and hearing of the story that serves to recognize and address anxieties in human beings living in a society that is not always safe. The threat of personal harm or of injury and not being able to get help needed is recognized in the story. The legend also gives residents of Pemberton Hall and students of Eastern Illinois University, a sense of community identity. People enjoy telling the story to amuse and frighten one another. A legend such as this one, touches the lives of most people who hear it.



For

Erin Faith,

Melissa Davita,

Jebediah Stewart,

and

Jordan David



## Acknowledgments

The encouragement and inspiration for this project was supplied by so many. I am grateful to many friends and professors who urged me along to see this completed. The project would not have come to fruition without Dr. Bonnie Irwin. Her time and energy to this project were given without ceasing. Her support and motivation gave the inspiration for the words on the following pages. Dr. Linda Coleman believed in both the project and in my ability to complete it. Her urging provided incentive to see this venture through to completion. I would also like to thank my reading committee, Dr. William Searle and Dr. Stephen Swords, for the time, energy, questions and advice they gave this project. My friends and family listened to endless hours of conversation about ghosts, buildings and university history. They spurred me on to the end. I am ever grateful.



## **Table of Contents**

Background	2
Methodology	9
The Oral Tradition of The Legend of Mary Hawkins	10
The Legend of Mary Hawkins in the Media	24
The Legend of Mary Hawkins as an Urban Legend	28
Function of The Legend of Mary Hawkins	34
Conclusions	44
Appendix A	48
Appendix B	50
Works Cited	77
Works Consulted	78
Interviews	80





*The night was cold and dark at Eastern Illinois University that night in the early 1900s; the dormitory known as Pemberton Hall was empty, empty except for two students who remained isolated in the deserted building when the other residents had left for break. The story is told that in order to play the piano, one of the roommates, who some say was named Mary, left the dorm room, and wandered to the music room on the fourth floor of the dorm.*

*Unknown to the girls, a man was in the building. To this day he remains unnamed. Some say he was a deranged escapee from a local mental institution, others claim that he was an outpatient , hired by the school to do janitorial work. He was there with murderous intent, and Mary at the piano became his victim. He axed her in the head and left her for dead. He went off into the night. He was never identified, and he was never heard from again. But Mary Hawkins, his victim, would become a legend.*

*As a result of her injury, she needed assistance. In an attempt to receive help, she laboriously crawled down the three flights of stairs between the piano room and the room where her roommate waited. She was trying to reach the only help available in the otherwise vacant dormitory. Thumping down the hall, bleeding profusely, and gasping for breath, she continued on her route back to her room, and to the place where help waited.*



*The roommate, who some say was named Jenny, remained inside the room, safely locked behind the door. Jenny began to hear the distant thump, thump, thump down the hall. She was frightened as she realized the noise was heading towards her door. The sound came closer then just stopped outside the dorm room door. Frightened and alarmed, Jenny remained inside the room, behind the locked door, and didn't dare to investigate the unusual and terrifying sound. Whatever it was probably meant danger and harm. Soon she began to hear a new sound at the door. An eerie scratching sound continued long into the night. Eventually it ceased, and Jenny fell asleep.*

*Early the next morning, it is told, Jenny summoned help from a man walking past the dormitory. Some say it was a milkman, others insist it was a policeman. She called for help from the window, and the gentleman immediately entered the dorm. He found Mary dead, lying in a pool of blood, with an axe in her head. He noted the fingers on her hands were bloody from scratching at the door, trying to summon help, trying to alert Jenny of her condition.*

## **Background**

The legend of Mary Hawkins, as well as a companion cycle of stories about Mary's ghost, is passed down orally from dorm resident to dorm resident and among other students at Eastern Illinois University. Many traditional characteristics of legends



are found in Mary's story. First, it is said to be a real occurrence, that is, it actually happened. When the story is introduced a narrator usually does more than hint that this could be real, but in fact prefaces the story with validating statements such as, "This happened in the early 1900s. . ." or "A murder happened on campus. . .," giving the sensation that it is an actual event being reported. Believing it to be a factual event, most people circulate the legend to others, who then carry it on as a believable story, retelling it to still others. The urban legend found on Eastern's campus is perpetuated in several ways. One is through the retelling from student to student, and from resident to resident within Pem Hall. The retelling of the story on campus by those who don't live in Pemberton Hall, but who have heard the story keep it alive as well. The story forms among the students at EIU a folk community because they attend the school that the ghost is said to haunt and share stories about both the ghost and the alleged events that led to Mary's death.

The listener as well as the narrator convey the story as an actual event. To be defined as a legend, fact need not be established outside the legend.

Patrick Mullen states that such rumored events holding actual locations, such as Pemberton Hall, and distinguishing a real person, like Mary Hawkins, give a tale "immediate and tangible reality" (Mullen 99). The legend is thought by many to be fact, is related as fact, and is believed by the ones doing the telling and listening.

Second, the legend is set in the historical past of Eastern Illinois University. According to an essay written by Mike Walters, Livingston C. Lord, President of Eastern Illinois University from 1899 to 1933, was the first to visualize a woman's dormitory in



the state of Illinois. This vision would not only make the classroom more accessible to women in the early twentieth century, but would provide an environment for young women to acquire social etiquette. This was in an era when women were not widely supported in seeking higher education, a time when women were not inspired to do much more with their lives than to marry and raise children.

Livingston C. Lord, the president Eastern from 1899 to 1933, would struggle for his vision of a dormitory for college women in Illinois. Seven years of opposition from the state legislature did not dissuade Lord's determination to see his dream come to light. The opposition he met came from what essayist Mike Walters calls, "the committee's seemingly hostile attitude" towards providing housing for women in a dormitory at Eastern. This is reflective of the early 1900s when women were not encouraged to leave the common socially approved confines of seeking marriage and child rearing over higher education, and those who did attend college lived at home.

During five of the seven years Lord was aided by State Senator Stanton C. Pemberton of Oakland, Illinois in pushing the bill through. Lord was not discouraged, but driven forward by the committee's lack of interest in his dream. He began "to confront legislators on an individual basis" (Walters) appealing to those he contacted to support his vision. Finally a bill was passed in 1907 by the Appropriations Committee of the state Legislature for \$100,000 to be used for the dormitory at Eastern. Because of the Senator's assistance and encouragement, the dormitory was named for him.

Pemberton Hall was officially opened for housing on January 4, 1909. The dorm offered housing for one hundred female students, and twenty-five "table board" students





were fed in Pemberton Hall's facility. Table board was the precursor of what is more commonly called food service today. The original cost of living for boarding at Pemberton Hall was four dollars a week, including laundry privileges.

During an interview session, a former resident of Pemberton Hall (Informant P<sup>1</sup>) explained to me that when she attended Eastern and lived in Pemberton Hall during the 1940s, not only were the rudiments of education taught to young women, but Pemberton Hall offered a sort of "finishing school" for female students. They were taught the basics of table setting, serving, and social manners and protocol. On various occasions the dormitory would host a dinner for the Dean of Women or Dean of Men, and the residents of the hall were expected to serve the dinner to the visitors. This training ensured that women would remain "ladies" even when they received a college education.

This particular urban legend also revolves around an actual person. Mary Hawkins emigrated from England in 1901 and was the first dorm director from 1910-1917, indicated by a plaque on the wall of the lobby in Pemberton Hall commemorating her service during this time as director of Pem Hall. She had strict rules with which the female dormitory residents had to comply. Because Mary Hawkins can be definitely identified as a person living at the time the purported murder took place, the story is given credence, adding to the idea that the events really did transpire.

Of course, there is a difference between the real Mary Hawkins, and the one purported to have been murdered, but those who tell and hear the tale do not make such distinctions. The real Mary Hawkins developed hard and fast rules for the dormitory

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<sup>1</sup>Letters refer to individual informants. For full transcripts of interviews, see Appendix B.



residents. Curfews were imposed on the female students. Curfews that would seem rigid by today's standards insisted the women were in the dorm no later than 7:30 pm. After that appointed time, residents were not allowed to leave the building and were obligated to study in their rooms until 10:00 pm. Mary Hawkins was in charge, and she was the one who decided whether or not students would be able to leave the dormitory after 7:30. Mike Walters writes that Mary wasn't an easy mark or a softie when it came to allowing women to leave after this time of the evening. The only unchaperoned excursions from the dormitory allowed were for the residents to attend church. Jaunts to dances, picnics, the theater were all required to be chaperoned. Walters also stated, "from 10:00 pm to 10:30 the women were allowed to participate in "riot" hours and at 10:30 pm lights were out and all was quiet."

When the rules were not adhered to, Mary Hawkins sent the offender to Lord, and he personally disciplined the offender. One resident from 1913 wrote the dormitory during Eastern's 75th anniversary celebration that Mary Hawkins had scare tactics of her own that she used to "frighten us by telling how awful it would be if we should die in the night and be found in an untidy room." This remark about Mary certainly sets the stage for the legend. The real Mary Hawkins was not a murder victim, but her death in 1918 was no less tragic. She died alone on October 29, in Kankakee State Mental Hospital, just a year and a half after leaving her job at Pemberton Hall. The death certificate attributes her death to "general paralysis of the insane," or what is now known as paresis, a symptom of late-stage syphilis (Quinn). This cause of death is especially ironic considering Mary Hawkins' strict rules for the young women in her charge.



To say that the real Mary Hawkins was strict and unbending would be a slight understatement when compared to the 24 hour open dorm policy used today. Unlike in Hawkin's day, the Hall now has no strict curfew rules, and male guests are allowed in the building to visit women residents without need of chaperons. No lights out rules are in effect, and no study times are imposed on students living in Pemberton Hall.

Both the historical past of the building and reminders of Mary's standards for residents tie the present to the past. A story such as this one that takes place in the historical past is defined as legend as distinct from a myth, which takes place in the remote past or a tale which takes place outside historical time. (Bascom 4). When one hears this legend, it is usually mentioned that the murder of Mary Hawkins at Pemberton Hall took place in the early part of the century. It is thus a story with a date to secure it in history. There is nothing unusual about the time or the setting of the legend, characteristics which offer credibility and factual basis to the legend.

Robert A. Georges uses the presence of such renowned factual bases in his discussion of the believability of such legends by arguing that:

[The legend] is concerned with an *actual* person, place, event, or phenomenon, or with a person, place, event or phenomenon that purportedly exists or is presumed to have existed at some earlier time. But whether or not such an explanation were included, the important thing to the definers would be to transmit the notion that those who tell and listen to legends find what they tell and hear to be *credible*; and the reason *why* they find what they tell and hear to be credible is,



presumably because it concerns *something* that is in some way familiar---and hence, in some way also "real"---to them (4).

Mary Hawkins was a real person. Pemberton Hall is located on campus. Both person and place have a history and an actual existence, although the real Mary Hawkins has long since passed away. If one is tempted to doubt her reality, a plaque in her honor can be found in the lobby of Pemberton Hall. The plaque identifies her as dorm mother during an actual point in the history of Pemberton Hall. Mary Hawkins is not an alleged being, but a former employee of Eastern Illinois University. Because she was real, the legend is believed to be real.

The existence of a real Mary Hawkins gives the legend validity, but the Mary Hawkins of legend is also different from her namesake. The legend describes Mary as a student living in the dorm. She is either waiting for a ride home, or has planned to stay at school most students have left the dormitory for home and break. The legend also indicates she has some musical interest or talent which provokes her to go up to the music room on the fourth floor to play the piano.

Because the settings of legends is placed in the historical past, the society they depict is generally similar to our own. In the case of the Mary Hawkins legend, the early 1910s is not so long ago, and the narrative is easy to picture, considering its setting still stands on campus. Listening to the story and seeing the dormitory add to the legend's credibility. The story often is told in the dorm itself, providing a performance setting which supports the validity of the tale.





Just as the story fits the definition of legend, its tradition clearly fits into the standard definition of folklore. According to Brunvand,

folklore may be defined as those materials in culture that circulate traditionally among members of any group in different versions, whether in oral form or by means of customary example, as well as processes of traditional performance or communication (1968:9).

The Legend of Mary Hawkins is part of a process of communication and performance as it is told to other people. It is passed from person to person orally. And many times in interviews, small variations in the narrative are illustrated by different performances of the same story. The following study will examine oral and print versions of the Legend of Mary Hawkins and discuss their relevance for those who tell and hear them.

## **Methodology**

Research on this project has been conducted in several ways. Aside from consulting many articles on folklore and urban legend, a visit to the Folklore Institute in Bloomington, Indiana, research and collection of newspaper articles in the archives kept in Pem Hall, and several phone interviews, I conducted sixteen interviews in order to collect versions of the Mary Hawkins legend. This process provided data for analyzing the living legend and led me to some interesting findings. I was able to visit Pem Hall one evening in March 1996, and conduct an interview with seven women who reside there. During my visit I was given a tour of Pem Hall, invited to see and collect



information from the archives kept there. I was given an interview<sup>2</sup> from an alumna who resided in Pem Hall during the 1960s. This interview took place in her home, and was conducted during the spring semester of 1996.

The interview with Informant P, who resided in Pemberton Hall during the Fall of 1944, took place in her home, and was given to me in June of 1998. Two university administrators granted interviews to me as well. These took place in the Administrative Offices at EIU during April of 1998. The current resident director of Pemberton Hall provided an interview taken in her office during the end of the Spring semester of 1998.

### **The Oral Tradition of the Legend of Mary Hawkins**

During interviews informants were asked a variety of questions concerning both the Legend of Mary Hawkins and ghost stories verifying her presence in Pem Hall. As research was done, an interesting exchange between the Legend of Mary Hawkins and the stories about ghostly haunting began to surface. It became evident that not only a legend was being revealed, but the ghostly hauntings were mentioned many times by those who actually lived in Pem Hall. The ghost story validates the murder legend, keeping both stories active.

Interviews regarding the Legend of Mary Hawkins routinely included a query as to what the interviewee first heard of the legend. I asked questions concerning details about the legend; what was told, what specifics involving characters in the legend were

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<sup>2</sup>See appendixes for full interview transcripts and description of informants.



remembered, and who told the informant about the story. Was the story provided by another student? For those living in Pem Hall, was it recounted in a group setting, by an RA, or was it on individual basis that the informant became aware of the legend. Some of those interviewed (B, I, M) heard of the legend before enrolling at EIU. Several (C, H, I) chose Pem Hall for their residence hall because of the legend and the intrigue of a ghost living on the premises. Others heard it upon arriving in Pem Hall, gaining knowledge from either a resident assistant or through an upper-class woman (A, B, J).

While there are actually several stories regarding the murder of Mary Hawkins at Pemberton Hall, all informants agreed on a story that relates that a woman was killed in Pemberton Hall in the early 1900s. All concur that either one or two students were left behind in the dormitory during a break. Most say it was over "spring break" or "break." Only one student (A) told me it was Christmas break. There is some variation about where the girls are located. One interview (E) indicates that the women are in the lobby, waiting for a ride when one student leaves to go use the rest room. Informant F also noted that the victim was unnamed. The most popular version tells that the two girls are in their dorm room, when one goes to the fourth floor to play the piano. Of the eight Pem-ites interviewed, all but two (E, J) suggested they had heard that the two girls were in the dorm room, and planning to remain for several days on the deserted campus. Of the seven interviewed in a group setting, five mentioned the victim either scratching of the door, or bloody fingers from scratching on the door for help.

Informants who lived in Pem Hall agree that the murder was done by a janitor or custodian. Some referred to him as "nutty," (H) others used the terms "deranged," (D)



"really nuts," (F) or "crazed" (L). The fatal injury is commonly brought on by an ax to the head or neck (A, B) or by beating (D, H). Two students (C, G) offered that victim was strangled with piano strings. Two (F, I) reported that the victim was raped as well as beaten.

The janitor in the legend is never found or heard from again. Interestingly, he is paramount in the murder, and then leaves the story line, and consistently, is never heard from again, never apprehended. Invariably there is no mention of him after the victim receives her injury. This serves as a point of anxiety, although perhaps unspoken, to give realization that he is still "out there" somewhere, and perhaps could strike again. An open ended quality that is characteristic of many legends.

It is indicated several times (C, F, G, J) that the janitor is brought to his murderous deed by annoyance over the music from the piano room. Also in several of the accounts through interviews, and from secondary newspaper articles, it is mentioned frequently that he was an outpatient from "the local insane asylum" (D, F, H, ). Accounts of the incident gathered in general conversations around EIU point to "Ashmore Estates" as the asylum where the janitor supposedly lived. Several people told me that Eastern hired "not so dangerous" patients from Ashmore Estates to do janitorial work on the campus, and the man responsible for the murder at Pem Hall was such a patient. Parenthetically, Ashmore Estates, located on Route 16 east of Charleston, I would find through phone calls and queries to the historical society, was never an "insane asylum," but rather a "poor farm" for homeless and the down and out.





Those aware of the story were asked to relate to me what they heard, how the story went, normally without any coaching. I tried to let them become story tellers, and perform the story as they remembered it coming first to them. It was due to this process that I became aware of the consistent performance of the Roommate's Death legend, with different variants having to do with the dormitory name, the murdered victim's identity and the location of the murder.

I also asked informants if they were aware of a community being formed among those who lived in Pem Hall. I included questions inquiring about the informants' awareness of the function of the story. According to Informant A, "the girls were just talking about it," when she moved in to the hall, sometimes to "freak out" the younger students. Informant B was told the story when she first moved in the dorm by the RA, but felt there was no real function in telling the story. It was just a fun thing to do, "because it scared everybody." Invariably, when asking informants about the Legend of Mary Hawkins, those who lived in Pem Hall, and those with friends who lived there, would branch off into discussions about the activities of the ghost who still remains at Pem Hall, and who is still up to mischievous capers.

Revenants, or "returners," according to Brunvand's *The Study of American Folklore*, are the main features of ghost stories.

The reasons for the returning of these beings are countless, according to the author. For example, they may return from the dead to set something right, or to complete something that their sudden departure took them away from (1968:163).



Brunvand's comments support the return and long stay of Mary in Pemberton Hall.

In the interviews of the actual residents of Pem Hall, the participants indicated little sense that the ghost is unfriendly or to be feared. Neither did those interviewed who had lived there in past years. Those aware of the legend and the hauntings of the ghost seldom suggested being fearful of the presence sensed. Moreover, it was suggested many times that Mary (the name given the ghost) was there to protect "her girls," and never to frighten or in anyway harm the occupants of Pem Hall.

The ghost has a penchant for peeking in keyholes , informant I told me. This is to check on her girls and to secure their safety, the residents believe.

and what she does is at night, she peeks into your keyhole, just to see

that you're in there sleeping, because at night there used to be curfews.

Several sources, including Informant J, described a ghostly figure who wears a robe or a gown, usually white in color(E424.1.1)<sup>3</sup>, and has long hair (F555.3). She was said by at least two informants (A, J) to have "no feet." Informant A shared that she was told the ghost comes to different doors in the building inquiring after her body, and then disappears. Informant B, who had a personal experience, or visit from Mary, described the figure that visited her room at 2:15 early one morning, as being clothed in a robe, but not appearing any different than a living woman. She mistook the spirit for her

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<sup>3</sup>These motifs are standard devices used to categorize and identify motifs or "narrative devices," according to Brunvand (1968:143). Repetitive occurrences within stories regarding the dead will generally begin with the letter "E" classification. These motifs are compiled in an index by Stith Thompson. Brunvand designates this general reference index as, "the most comprehensive general reference works in folklore studies. . ." (143). The alphanumeric classifications will be used here to identify traditional motifs in the Mary Hawkins legend.



roommate, in fact, and only the next morning reasoned that the figure had been a ghost. Informant M reported seeing a ghostly figure move in one of the fourth floor windows when she was driving by during the day. Informant M described what she saw as:

it looked like a person standing there with white on. But I could just see like shoulders and a robe or a gown or something. I couldn't see her head or anything. I could just see a form in the window. And that's what I saw.

The sighting maybe attributable to the power of suggestion, since she and I were discussing the results of my other interviews moments before this happened.

Another sighting occurred in room 245 of Pemberton Hall, at three o'clock one morning when two women saw a shadow on the wall which moved by them. One of the girls was in the process of crossing the room to hang up the phone. Both girls corroborate the story of the appearance (E421.5). Neither voiced fear or anxiety at seeing the figure. They felt the presence was Mary, and that she was non-threatening. The two women were not included in our interview session, but the story was related to me by Informant E.

Mary seems to have a fascination with electrical appliances. The interviews consistently disclosed that the ghost is notorious for a impish interest in electronic devices. Several interviewed reported bizarre electrical malfunctions in stereos, televisions, radios, clocks, computers and lights in various rooms, mostly said to be in the "old side" of Pem Hall (C, D, E, I). Yet, while reporting such experiences the victims of the malfunctions find a humorous allure in these developments rather than



frustration or fear. Informant G reports that while a friend was visiting her room, she was using the computer, and the TV began "flipping through the channels," while neither girl had the remote control. "It [the remote] was across the room." Many of the residents have experienced computer glitches, when for no apparent reason the computer in the dorm room would begin to flick on and off, with no one remotely close to it at the time. No where else in the building were electrical interferences reported. Fans reportedly turn on for no reason. One woman reported seeing her digital clock go backwards twenty four hours and then return to the correct time, from where she sat across the room. Radios flip on for no reason by themselves. Lights turn on or off by themselves. The lights are not the type with the switch, but are the old, push button type. Informant I shared with me that one morning very early a radio in her room came on very loud, broadcasting a station "very clearly" that previously the girls were unable to tune in. A fact of interest she shared was that in order to turn this particular radio on, several levers had to be flipped on in order for the radio to work.

Another time Informant G was locked out of her room, because the lock on her dorm room door flipped after she had closed it. She checked the latch several times to assure herself that the bolt wasn't enabling the door to lock. She turned the knob to check that the door was unlocked. "When we came back, the door was locked." Several students (B, D, E and J) reported being locked out of their rooms. They had left the room for just a minute, and checked the lock to make sure it was opened. When returning, they found the lock had flipped. The explanation for this happening usually held that "Mary was taking care of me."





The common comment, "she is our protector" can no more be emphasized than by her proclivity for tending to unlocked doors. A very common remark by those interviewed was similar to Informant D, who said, "she locked me out of my room." Or, Informant E's comment, "I left the room, my door lock was open, I came back and it was shut and locked." As Informant B explained, many times inside the old building doors tend to swell slightly due to moisture. At these times it is difficult to close the doors to the rooms without slamming them. However, often when a student returns to a room she will find the door firmly shut when it was impossible to shut moments before.

Mary is also known for protecting the women in other ways. Informant C told me, "I tried looking for her, for like signs of her [after moving into Pem Hall], but decided that wasn't the right thing to do." She went on to say that she had invited a young man into her room on one occasion, and during the visit she realized,

he was not a nice guy at all. He got the wrong impression and thought that I was going to go out with him, and stuff like that. And he said I couldn't be friends with these other guys, because they were a threat to him. And so I kinda got mad, because he was telling me what to do. And for some reason my phone, which is on the right hand side of the room, and as he was turning around, the phone cord, for some reason it just shot all the way to the desk, and tripped him. And to this day, I firmly believe that that was Mary who went and tripped him, just to piss him off.



Mary is seen protecting her girls. During interviews, residents of the dormitory repeated the thought or feeling explaining why Mary is present recurred. Many of those interviewed had different stories to relate giving legitimacy to the idea that Mary has returned to protect the women of Pemberton Hall.

Mary's ghost is also blamed for other strange occurrences, not always as a protectress. Odd things have happened which are often attributed to Mary's ghost. These occurrences bring trepidation, not always associated with a peaceful ghost, as Informant E relates. She told me was sitting at the front hall one night very late, working when the following transpired:

I was sitting in the chair at the bottom of the the stairs, and the windows *FLEW* opened, a gust of wind went through. . . I thought it might be Mary. . . and they [doors] were swinging back and forth and I was on my feet and . . . Oh! My God! And I didn't want to go back up to that landing even after I realized it was only the wind. I was afraid to walk back up and close the windows. I did, but I didn't want to!

The possibility of a ghost on the premises, and the sudden frightening noise, caused this student to fear the presence of Mary's ghost. In this case, Mary didn't seem to be "taking care of her girl's," but instead giving at least one resident a heart stopping fright.

Sometimes Mary's ghost can be frightening, but the majority of people I interviewed felt that Mary's presence is peaceful, and in no way threatening. They all say they are not as afraid of Mary as when they were first acquainted with the stories about her. I found it interesting that the girls would offer explanations for the things



they were offering me as evidence about Mary's visits. "I hear whispers in the hall way, or on the landings. I think, 'It's just the heater,' but I wonder if it is really Mary,"

Informant E said.

Informant J told me she heard things moving around on the fourth floor above her when she lived on the third floor of Pemberton Hall. "I would hear something walking around. Maybe it was just animals or something." This is a common motif in urban legends, according to Brunvand. "Mysterious ghostlike noises heard, (E402)" (1968:163).

An interesting and recurring factor became evident to me as I sat with this group. When one or another of the group would tell me of noises they heard, or windows flying open, or electronic appliances acting up, they usually offered some logical rationalization for the event. Perhaps the wind blew the windows open, or maybe animals (i.e. mice) were scampering around in the attic of the building giving the sensations of human footsteps on the floor above. I wondered at this, and conclude that giving the explanations not only alleviates fears, but perhaps makes the tellers appear not so frightened or gullible.

One woman in the group (C), heard about a ghost on campus living in Pem Hall, and for that reason, sought out the residence hall for her residence. The current resident director told me of one girl in particular who had to move after hearing of the ghost, wanting away from the "haunting" environment due to her strong beliefs that ghosts don't exist, and that stories of such are evil. One of the group of interviewees (H) had made an effort to find information on her own, for her own interests about Mary



Hawkins. She consulted books in the library as well as past newspaper articles in the archives to find out more about the ghost, the legendary Mary Hawkins, and the actual first Dorm Mother of Pemberton Hall.

All those who know the story enjoy telling it. Feeding the performance of the story is a player or performer that seems to be in most people. Storytelling is an age old form of communicating and connecting with others around each individual. Rodney Dale writes,

Ever since the dawn of time, before the days of television, man has felt the need to exercise God's glorious gift of speech by talking to his fellows. Story telling obviously meets several needs: it fills silences on long winter evenings, it preserves knowledge and traditions, and --by no means least-- it confers a special aura upon the teller: the campfire personality. (7)

It would seem then, that the advancement of technology, television and then onward to today's internet technology, hasn't stifled this human quality. The need to tell a story survives. The need to tell the story remains, only ways of telling the story change.

Ordinarily, once the ghost is mentioned, the listener begins to concentrate on what is being said. The subject of ghosts is something that catches the attention of people, whether or not they believe in ghosts. The more animated the performance, the more meaningful the story is. The more moving a description, the easier it is to store in one's memory. I noticed a vibrancy, a sort of zeal, taking place in the countenance of the people I listened to when telling me about Mary Hawkins. Different experiences were





told and highlighted or accentuated with dramatic gestures, use of hands, and body language. Intonation of voice changed as excitement increased, and inflection of certain words, emphasis on others drew me into the story telling. The legend was something exciting enough for these people to remember and to retell.

As the storytelling proceeded, those interviewed became at ease with my presence, and the fact that I was interested in what they had experienced as residents of Pem Hall seemed to make them very comfortable in sharing. The expressions on their faces became more responsive to each other. Body language became more open, less guarded, gestures and facial expression became more relaxed, as the story teller changed from appearing unsure to one of confidence and security. A topic close to each of them, the students began to have fun with it. We laughed, we got spooked, and we learned a great deal about the traditional story of Mary Hawkins.

Something about the group discussion and interview session that was obvious was a competition that took place among the group speakers. While each one was there adding to and supporting the other information being given, there was a individuality evident in an element of wanting to tell something a bit scarier, or something someone else hadn't mentioned that would bring a new impact to the discussion, aiding in building the excitement and energy of the session. Walter J. Ong terms this characteristic of storytelling "agonistic" or competitive (43) and claims it to be part of tradition cultures that express and communicate stories orally.

Time passing, and popular phrases or "slang" leads to change of wording in the oral tradition of the Legend of Mary Hawkins. Time changing updates the phrases



delivered through word of mouth, and this becomes evident when the oral telling is written down. This occurrence brings about subtle changes in the actual legend or story.

An example could be the term Resident Assistant. In the days when the actual Mary Hawkins lived, there was no such thing. The woman who was in charge of the procedures within the dorm was referred to as "dorm director" or "dorm mother". Today, the term "resident assistant" or "RA" is a more popular label for the person responsible for order within the dorm. Invariably, when talking to different informants, Mary Hawkins was referred to as the resident assistant during the time the legend depicts.

The words used to describe the story are borrowed from what is currently popular, or that language used to describe what happened then in today's "slang" or popular usage. This updates the legend, making it more easily understood to present day listeners, and also creates sub-legends revolving around the original content. Present popular terms enable members of the audience to relate to the story, thus bringing it into a present day setting, thereby allowing better assimilation to the listener's understanding and connection. The social environment of the story telling allows the information to be assimilated by the persons listening.

Comparing the individual interviewees with the interview taking place with the group of students, one notes a vast difference in the countenance of the speakers or story tellers. The group seemed to provide a format to tell the story of Mary Hawkins without worry of being disbelieved. The community formed by the students who live together in the Hall provided a bond that the ones outside the circle don't have. As the forty five



minute interview progressed, the group became more animated in their sharing, and they enjoyed the topic as they related to me their own experiences with Mary, how they heard the story, and what they heard. This story telling environment session stressed for the researcher the "community" of Pem Hall. Through a flowing performance of storytelling, a new resident or visitor in Pem Hall hears an oral narration that changes with the individual gestures and personal mannerisms, and reconstructs the tale of Mary and how she is known to tap on walls (E402.1.5), or open doors and windows in the dorm repeatedly (E388.1c). This oral recounting of the tale is one of the criteria for a rumored event to fall into the classification of folklore or urban legend. Through this personal interpretation, the new resident is informed that Mary is said to be a "good ghost" and comes back to protect those living in the dorm (E363.2), or as several of those I interviewed said, "She keeps watch over all 'her girls.'" All of these stories and experiences are passed down and kept alive as the older residents graduate, and a new semester brings new students to Pemberton Hall.

Another version of the story circulates among another group on campus. Interestingly, the two versions vary from between the groups of resident assistants and those of students. The student version is the one related above. The residence hall staff version maintains Mary's identity as an RA and not the victim. The Resident Director at Pem Hall told me she had heard about a "head master, or dorm mother" named Mary Hawkins who had been in charge over a break when a student was murdered in Pem Hall. Since Mary Hawkins was the Resident Director during the time of the murder,



she was guilty about not being able to save the student, not being there when the tragedy happened, or something, so when she died, her ghost came back to the hall to protect those women who lived here.

Sitting in on a Folklore Seminar in the Spring Semester of 1998, I heard the same variation of the story from another RA attending the class. This version, because it circulates among RA's, emphasizes the duties of the residence assistants over the actions of the victim. We can assume the motives behind this version are different as well.

The story circulates far beyond these two groups of women. Dr. Jorns, President of Eastern, when asked if he ever relates the story to others told me, "Oh sure, to me its one of those traditions that a campus that really has a history--and I think it's important that we accentuate that. But it's one of those traditions that I like to emphasize." In this way, Jorns is circulating the story about a tradition at Eastern through a tradition of oral story telling. He circulates the story more widely by telling the story to those outside of Eastern. In telling a "history" of the campus, he is relaying the information to people who whether they attend Eastern or not, become aware of the story. Eastern is perhaps remembered by those in contact with the President of the campus after hearing the fact that a ghost is living at EIU.

### **The Legend of Mary Hawkins in the Media**

Not only is The Legend of Mary Hawkins passed along through oral tradition, but the media does a considerable job of promoting the tale. This particular story has been published a number of times through newspaper articles. The media representation





allows for the story to gain additional credence as notice of Mary Hawkins, and her haunting the halls of Pem, not only convinces readers of the actual event, but reaches more of the outside population surrounding Eastern, causing the story to reach farther than it would, perhaps, without such notice. The media is another means by which the story continues to circulate.

The legend of Mary Hawkins can frequently be found recounted in local newspapers. *The Decatur Herald*, the *Charleston Times Courier* and the *Daily Eastern News* all run articles about Mary from time to time, especially during the month October, in recognition of Halloween. The timing is ironic, considering Mary's actual death was close to that date. Pemberton Hall sometimes takes advantage of its notoriety and opens its doors to the public to offer a "haunted house". These events, advertised in local papers, also add to the validity of the legend.

Most recently, an article in the October 25, 1997, edition of the *Charleston Times Courier* ran entitled, "What is that noise? Ask the Resident Ghost", with an eye attracting color picture of Pem Hall located on the page. This recent article tells the story of Mary Hawkin's murder, perpetuating the legend through print. Such a write up of the legend published in a newspaper lends a credence to the story. How easy is it to say to a person, "Well, it must be true, or else why would the paper print it?" Because it is printed and circulated, a natural assumption goes with the article allowing the public to believe it to be true. One doesn't have to stretch the imagination very far to imagine someone reading the article and using it as "proof," "It is true. . . I read it in the paper!"



In 1994 an article was written in the Charleston *Times Courier* reviewing a book written by Beth Scott, titled, *Haunted America*. The book cites specific areas across the United States with a ghost story relating to each one. Illinois holds the distinction of being accounted for by the presence of the ghost in Pem Hall on EIU's campus. Scott's book thus spreads Mary's fame far beyond central Illinois. Another entry for Illinois is noted in the state's section, as well as one for Mary Hawkins. Included on the same page with the book review is the story of Mary Hawkins, her murder and the fact that Mary Hawkins' ghost or spirit remains at Pem Hall. The article also recounts the experience a resident (Informant B) had at Pem Hall.

In an article published in the 1984 Summer edition of *Old Main Line*, a campus publication, alumnus Ed Cobau recounts the legend basically the same way, except that the victim was "chased down the hall from a piano lounge half alive, to her dorm room, where she frantically clawed at the door seeking assistance from her roommate." This was the only account I found where Mary was "chased," didn't crawl to her friend's door hunting for help.

Perhaps this variant is caused by taking the shell of the already existent story and adding some more graphic language to add an additional horror element to the story. The language used by Cobau clearly makes the legend more exciting to read, and heightens the sensations of an already gory story.

As a one time Decatur *Herald and Review* staff writer, Informant B recalls living in Pemberton Hall in her feature article dated October 25, 1984. She reports an experience of waking to find what she stated was the ghost at the side of her bed, early in the



morning in a dorm room at Pemberton Hall. The account<sup>4</sup> of her experience retold in the newspaper article is in the Pemberton Hall scrap books, or archives kept by the residents. The close identification between the *Decatur Herald* writer and the current residents is strong. The fact that the writer attended Eastern is another link to present students. The gender of the writer and being a past resident of Pemberton Hall offers a common bond. The disclosure of the writer's experience gives the legend validity as well as substantiating the region of Charleston, Illinois, and Eastern University. The temptation to believe in Mary's ghost is validated when these characteristics are realized. The author offers her authority to the legend, making it more believable to those living in the hall at present. This actual published account lends undeniable credence that the ghost does indeed exist. This close association gives the hearer the ability to "know" the one who experienced a visit from Mary, thereby offering relevance to the legend. This assumed authoritative version packs a double whammy to the general public as to the legitimacy of not only a murder having taken place on campus, but also the very real possibility of a ghost haunting a local dormitory. The tendency to believe what she reports is harder to resist because of her association with the media. It is thought to be true, because it is in print. There is validity in the newspaper articles that is not assumed in other forms of writing.

William M. Michael, another features writer, wrote an article for *The Decatur Herald* October 1984. The title of this human interest story is entitled, "I Ain't Afraid of No Ghosts!" Michael writes of his experience as what he terms to be a "ghost buster".

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<sup>4</sup>Full account of this experience may be found in interview transcripts Appendix B.



He went to Pem Hall, stayed the night in the room said to be the music room, the room where the actual murder was said to have taken place. Michael's article, which reports he left Pem Hall having no encounter with what he terms, "The ghost of Mary."

Regardless of the outcome of his visit, his exploits are written in a newspaper that the public regards a news reporting vehicle. If it wasn't a valid story, a factual item worth noting, why would it be in a newspaper?

Interestingly, the two newspaper writers, whose articles were published at the same time, approach the Legend of Mary Hawkins from opposing points of view. While Michael's article throws a humorous light on the ghost of Mary, Informant B portrays the very real relationship Mary seems to have with the women of Pem Hall. Michael's article is written with a tongue-in-cheek sort of feeling. He reports, "I was disappointed Mary didn't appear," in concluding the article, "but deep down I didn't think I would have a ghost of a chance of meeting her anyway." He uses language that belies the existence of a ghost. As someone from outside the community, Michael brings interest to the legend through his article, but clearly does not take it as seriously as his colleague, a former resident of Pemberton.

The experience of the one time student and writer sheds light on the fact that Mary's ghost seems to appear exclusively to women, which adds significance to the claim that Mary "watches out for her girls" and that her presence is real to many of them.

### **Legend of Mary Hawkins as an Urban Legend**





The legend of Mary Hawkins has the traditional aspect of a tale being transmitted orally from one person to another. This legend has circulated around the campus of Eastern, and around the town of Charleston for a number of years. One informant I spoke with remembers hearing the story when she lived in Pemberton Hall in the mid 1960's. According to Brunvand and Degh, a similar legend, called the Roommate's Death," began to gain momentum in circulation on other campuses around this time (Vanishing Hitchhiker 58). There is a tradition of such haunting narratives across America and from European countries as well.

Mary is Pemberton Hall's personal ghost, giving the residence hall a traditional narrative of her activities, making its residents exclusive in some sense, as well as lending the surrounding community of Charleston some element of being a folk group by having this story in common. This continual recounting gives Eastern a significant notice. The traditionally told story circulates without being put to rest.

The legend is subject to some modification, but the structure of the story and the formula, function, style and elements of the story remain the same. In the Legend of Mary Hawkins there are several versions that are very close in pattern, and have the same outcome. For instance, in what I will call Variant 1, Mary and her roommate opt to stay over break in the deserted Pem Hall. Mary leaves the shared dorm room for the fourth floor to play the piano. While playing the deranged janitor severely injures her. At this point Variant 2 indicates that she is raped, and rather than axed, she is strangled with the strings of the piano. Similarly, Variant 3 could be added to the list, as the account given by Resident Assistants. That is the story told that while the RA was not



injured, her ghost returned after her uneventful death, out of guilt for what happened to a murdered resident during her reign over the hall.

The variants of the story are important to note. Linda Degh, a noted folklorist, did an interesting study on the formulaic tale called, "The Roommate's Death." Degh concludes that this same story is a commonplace story among women on many college campuses. Degh notes,

The themes of this legend are extremely popular among college students, especially girls who are in the critical period of transition between the sheltered life of adolescence in the family home and that of independence and responsibility as they abandon a former life of protection. The plot is remarkably consistent in regard to its main outline and narrative development. The relatively limited variation within the individual texts occur usually into the setting of the scene, and in the subsequent discovery of the victim. The elaboration of these segments serves as a means of dramatizing the warning message the story communicates. (Indiana Folklore 55)

Degh contends through this finding, that there are many versions of the same story, thereby offering three variants as a noted similarity and functional variants of the "Roommate's Death" legend.

The different versions derive through things such as the place where the legend occurs. There are ghost stories of other dorms being haunted in different vicinities and sites, but the pattern within the other narratives is identical to the one surrounding



Pemberton Hall. The details such as place, time, and people involved may be different, but the same pattern of the story exists. The same moral or warning is evident, the same anxiety resulting from having heard the story is similar, while the basic theme of the story varies slightly. The idea and phenomenon remain the same, only details are changed to fit the region of the story to make it familiar. The local story of Mary Hawkins fits a popular story pattern in other places as well, and most obviously, it is circulated primarily on college campuses. The tales have a parallel pattern of development to them. Such parallels support the fact that the legend is formularized. These variants are "basic motifs which also shape 'The Hook', 'The Boyfriends Death', and 'The Killer in the Back Seat,'" according to Linda Degh in her article "The Roommate's Death and Related Dormitory Stories in Formation" from *Indiana Folklore* (Degh 1969:55). All three of these stories cited by Degh are generally told from a female's perspective. All feature a menacing stranger, take place in a car at night, and in all three the woman involved narrowly escapes death.

Another common characteristic in urban legends as in all folklore is the anonymity of the tale. It has no author's name attached to it, no particular person is given notice or honor for originating the legend. Normally, someone is passing information on which is material told to them by someone else. The originator of the information is unknown and less important than the one who informed the narrator. Having no mention of the author's name lends belief that somebody the listener knows and trusts has told him or her the truth, realizing the account is passed down in person, and from someone who has heard it from another reliable source. Gaining the



information in this manner is what Bruvand calls a "FOAF"<sup>5</sup> in his book, *Curses! Broiled Again!* He suggests,

Most people tell such stories as having happened to a friend of a friend (a FOAF for short). And most of them do, indeed believe the tale to be true; after all someone else told them it happened to a FOAF, and so they pass it on, giving a FOAF as the source of the story (175).

It is common to find an interviewee who has heard the legend of Mary Hawkins from a person who had attended Eastern in the past, someone who the interviewee either knew personally or someone known by the person who told the interviewee the story. This person is someone who the recipient of the story has invested trust in. This trust allows the legend to be passed on with an element of "proof" having come from a FOAF. An element of authority is given to the FOAF through the listener allowing the story to be regarded as an actual incident. The story is repeated in the belief that it is true, when in reality it is a repetition of a traditional text.

This close trust is most evident when talking with a newly arrived resident at Pem Hall. Possibly it is a trust transferred from the parents she left at home to the newly found friends in the dormitory. When she is telling about what she has heard from an older dorm resident, she demonstrates conviction of reliability because someone trusted told her the information from a personal experience brought to her from a trusted source.

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<sup>5</sup> Rodney Dale, the originator of the acronym, defines FOAF in his book, *It Happened to a Friend*. "...a word I invented to stand for "friend of a friend", the person to whom so many of these dreadful things... happens (12).





The mutual trust is built on comradeship within the dormitory. Living in the same hall, and going through the experience of gaining education allows a common bond. The younger woman looks up to the more experienced student, and believes in her. This trusted association builds the foundation for first believing the story told, and then the foundation for telling it to someone else. It happened to someone she knows therefore, she has the "authority" to tell the story, to pass it on. The experience not only makes for exciting material to discuss, but it helps to form a common bond within a larger community.

Another element of folklore found in the Legend of Mary Hawkins is the notable formulas in which the legend is told. Brunvand explains,

Most folklore tends to become formularized--that is, it is expressed partly in commonplace terms. These may range in complexity from simple set phrases and patterns of repetition to elaborate opening and closing devices or whole passages of traditional verbal stereotypes.

(Brunvand 1968: 9)

In the Legend of Mary Hawkins, there are several formulaic scenes. The murdered victim is a woman staying in a deserted dorm with another resident. One of students leave, the other remains in the locked room. A stranger, unnamed, unfamiliar to the two residents attempts to murder the student outside the locked room. Receiving horrendous injury, she seeks help by crawling back to where she knows her roommate is. The roommate, however, is not aware of her need, but interprets the noise at the door to signal danger or an intruder, and stays behind the locked door. Help is never given to



the injured student, and so death occurs. During the daylight of the next day, help from a "safe male," usually a policeman is summoned, and it is revealed to the remaining roommate that the person outside the door is her friend.

These features never change when the story is told. They remain the same, and in the same order. This is the formula compatible with other versions of "The Roommate's Death" urban legends found on other campuses. The formula is consistent in the urban legend, not only at Eastern, but in similar ones told on other campuses in other locales.

### **Function of The Legend of Mary Hawkins**

The element of fear and anxiety plays a tremendous role in the function of the legend. It is not just a fun and scary story told to give one the immediate "willies" and then be forgotten. Urban legends serve many purposes for those doing the telling as well as those listening to the story. These attributes hold interesting considerations when looking beyond the initial story of the Legend of Mary Hawkins, or that of any other urban legend. For example, there are warnings within these stories, warnings regarding consequences for women who go against established gender roles, women who allow themselves to remain unprotected, isolated from society or community. Mary Hawkins had Jenny's company, and perhaps they did the right thing rooming together for the stay while the rest of the college community was away on break. The mistake was made when Mary left the confines of the room, and went wandering upstairs to the fourth floor of the dormitory alone, unprotected from the rest of the community she belonged to. It could be said that Jenny was isolated, as well. However, she had the locked door



protecting her from intruders, and the outside and very unstable world that young women should avoid at all costs. One function of the story serves as a warning to be aware of the consequences of permitting oneself to become separated from the mainstream of population.

Stories of this nature offer authorities in the residence hall a wonderful opportunity to suggest rules to live by without becoming the "heavy" or one who could be labeled a killjoy. Instead, the person who is the older or perhaps enforcer of rules and regulation, can be one of the girls, and still suggest that there are proper avenues of behavior, without alienating herself from the group by insisting on rigid rules which can be interpreted as control by the one who is under the authority of perhaps a resident assistant at the dormitory.

There is also a very real function for the anxiety being expressed by both the teller and the listener. As discussed, for any new resident of a dormitory, it is perhaps the first time she has left home and is in the unique phase of her life when she is no longer adolescent, but is not yet able to cope on her own out in the world. College becomes a middle ground for a young woman, in that it is the first time when she can and does make direct decisions concerning her schedule, her social life, and her life in general without the immediate approval of her parents. She is away from home and the "powers that be," finding herself in a situation that is all too soon subconsciously anxious or uncomfortable for her. The urban legend supplies an outlet for such anxiety, while, at the same time, suggesting there is a probable reason for such anxiety.



Emotional outlets for anxiety are satisfied by the telling of the story. Also an emotional release results from telling the story, because while the speaker is probably outwardly scoffing at the idea of such a thing occurring, she can inwardly relieve a very real need to talk about her uneasiness. Because "grown up" attitudes and actions are expected of students away from home, it may be difficult to articulate the apprehensions a new co-ed feels being away from home. Discussing the story with fellow roommates, or other students staying in dorms on campus, allows an otherwise unacceptable concern to be expressed without admitting the fear is real, or of being true. Legends, then, allow the teller to express fear that would otherwise be unacceptable to voice. The believable reality of murder, of crime, of needing and not being able to acquire help in an emergency, of tension being out of a protective environment, are all easy to express through the legend, and thus alleviating real stress in not only the teller but the audience as well.

Anxious feelings are relieved by voicing what might not be otherwise desirous to discuss or acknowledge. Talking about murder, for instance, is not something that is readily acceptable, because of the apprehension it causes. The discussion of the legend gives one the freedom to examine the fear of murder and the even morbid curiosity caused by a murder. This outlet is provided and recognized at the same time, which helps allay fear.

In the Legend of Mary Hawkins there is a connection between the young women of Pemberton Hall and the anxiety of leaving home and security for perhaps the first time. There may be a significant bond as well between the younger students coming into





the hall, and understanding from the older students who have lived with a ghost on the premises. A bond is formed in this sympathetic knowledge of the anxieties held by those living in a new and strange environment.

The influence of our culture in general has some impact on such stories. According to Linda Degh, there is more to a legend than the scare of the shocking ending such as that in the Legend of Mary Hawkins. Degh states,

As far as my own limited research experience allows conjecture, a good number of American belief legends have been developed, maintained, and used for special purposes in the life of young people between junior high school and college age. The period of coming of age, the passage from childhood to adulthood, the crisis of sexual maturation generate the tension and conflicts that convert supernatural and horror stories into suitable outlets. (63-64)

Degh illustrates that this age group is also confronting issues of leaving home and going into unfamiliar territory, that being the "big bad world" and all that the new horizons hold for the young person leaving the security of home. The college serves as a "training camp--an initiation seclusion, as it were--bridging the sheltered family life with the responsible life of the adults" (Degh 64).

The legend which circulates around Pemberton Hall has some interesting warnings for young people to consider. Our culture beats into young girls' heads that they are frail and need protection as a result. Also the legend is a constant reminder that a woman should not leave the protected confines of a room with a lock of guaranteed



safety. In the Legend of Mary Hawkins, the janitor typifies the stranger who preys on young and innocent victims, especially women, intending harm to them. The janitor is an image of what a young girl should know to avoid and distrust.

Daniel Barnes suggests another functional aspect of college campus lore. The Pem Hall Legend follows the same structure as he finds in most other campus stories. That is,

each of the tales follows a three step movement: interdiction, violation of interdiction, and the consequence. Because their didactic function is necessarily subtle (as anyone who has ever dealt with teenagers must know!), the tales must avoid obvious signs of moral purpose. (Barnes 312)

Controlling young women through strict rules and regulations risks rebellion. Telling a person she cannot do something might only prompt her to wonder why. The urban legend with the scary finish not only entertains, but lends a lesson about consequences and the implications of danger, should the consequences not be considered. Guidelines and suggested rules of behavior are illustrated in the story of Mary Hawkins.

Carl Lindahl addresses this area of appropriate behavior in women by examining women's roles and what is expected of women (Lindahl 1986:13) in our society. Looking at the "Roommate's Death" legend, Lindahl says the role of "stranger" in the tale is a shared role. Obviously, the janitor is the one to be wary of. He is the intruding stranger who does the harm to the wandering musical coed. But, as Lindahl further suggests, the victim wanders outside the safety of the locked room, allowing her to take



of the role of "stranger", too, at least for her roommate. Further, the milkman, or policeman who offers help for the remaining coed also fits the "stranger" role, giving ambiguity to the role of stranger in the story.

Lindahl notes:

To a certain extent, . . . the "Roommate's Death" . . . preserve[s] the classic legend boundaries of familiar vs. unfamiliar: once you have failed to lock a . . . door or stepped into the hallway of a deserted dormitory, you enter a dangerous new world. The difference here is that in the older legends, a code continues to operate *after* the line is crossed: a clearly malignant being, unmistakable in appearance, will carry you off. In the new legendary, all rules are suspended; the seeming source of the horror may become a source of true salvation, or the familiar and acceptable become unrecognizably strange. (15)

Certainly this is illustrated in the "Roommate's Death" and in The Legend of Mary Hawkins. When Mary steps outside the locked room, and meanders throughout the halls of the dormitory, she steps over the threshold of not only safety, but also familiarity. She becomes the stranger after she leaves, because with wounds inflicted by the other stranger, the janitor, she becomes an unknown from the perspective of Jenny, who has never left the safe environment of the dorm room. Mary thus becomes a stranger to Jenny. The noises she used to solicit her friend's help, are interpreted from behind the door as a threat. We all know that the door should never be opened to strangers. The suggestion is that Mary was once "a loved and familiar friend" (Lindahl 14) but once she



left the dorm room, the girl remaining in the room fears the noise made by Mary to be that of a dangerous and "hideous stranger" (Lindahl 14). Given what happened to the real Mary Hawkins, the reidentification of the victim as stranger is even more interesting. Few of the women of Pemberton Hall in 1917 and 1918 would have recognized their former dorm director as her brain deteriorated and she became more and more deranged.

Lindahl continues by comparing the modern legend to those of earlier times, asserting:

There are now two centers of ambiguity--the "familiar" enemy and the stranger "friend"--and one cannot safely or rationally choose between them; the core figures of the "stranger" stories are doubly dual. The modern legend seems to imply, among other things, that the "uncoded" world is even more frightening than the supernatural world infested with evil forces. (15)

By this Lindahl implies that we know our adversaries when they are dressed as monsters. We know to avoid the Draculas, Frankensteins and Grendels of the good old days. But a knock on the door, a cry for help from beyond the door by one needing assistance is not something that is easily trusted by the "codes" we have set in our modern world. The warning is implicit in Mary's outcome. Don't leave the sanctuary of safety. The "uncoded world", as Lindahl calls it, is a world that has no iron clad rules, like those of the older legends. No one is to be trusted in the uncoded world. The rules change when women step out of the roles our society places on their gender. The codes are undone.





and no longer valid.

Beverly Crane's thoughts agree with those of Lindahl in the area of roles for women changing and causing confusing lines and thresholds for designating boundaries for women in today's society.

The traditional notions of a woman's place therefore tend to produce cultural attitudes which expect women to remain "innocent" as well as "home", "together" with their families and with other women, and "silent" when men discuss important or intellectual matters. (Crane 144)

Crane is assessing the changing world we live in, and illustrating the daring moves women are making going against what is imposed because of their gender. Women traditionally were not to go out and become learned with a college degree. They were not to step over the incorruption prescribed to them by entering into the "man's world" or the work force. Women were to be at home providing and reinforcing the conventional patterns that offer security to her family. She was the manager of the family's emotional and nutritional needs, as well as physical security. Organizing and preparing the home in a functioning manner was her prescribed role through society's standards. Woman was to forget about becoming educated, and understanding the workings of the "brave new world" that functions outside her home, and her gender.

Both the "Roommate's Death" legend and the legend of Mary Hawkins seem to have become popular in the sixties, as mentioned. It is no accident that this coincides with an era of greater independence and opportunity for women. Even though attitudes have changed, mixed emotions and anxieties remain, allowing the legend to continue its



popularity.

The warning is clear. There is a world out there belonging to men, who can take care of themselves. The education and "important or intellectual matters" are not to be reckoned with by women. That is the man's world, the man's place in this modern society. To stray from the confines of what is established in the culture, is to walk out of "locked doors" designated by society, and away from "safety" determined by the community woman is born into.

To venture out of the established boundary is to invite trouble. According to Crane, the girls in Pemberton Hall had "forsaken the tradition represented by the initial positive grouping in order to become 'intellectual,' which is presumably why they are now a victim and survivor" (144). The value of the Roommate's Death Legend, whether consciously understood or not, according to Crane (134), is to teach and warn women that if they step outside the appointed guidelines for their gender, the danger is ending up locked outside the safety net they should be satisfied with in the first place.

General student unrest in the sixties coupled with acquired freedoms of women may very well have led to greater resentment of students toward the controlling rules of authority in the dormitory environment. This phenomenon may account for the legend's killing off of a strict RA of the past, Mary Hawkins, by turning her into a student and ultimately a victim. The legend borrows the name of a real person --Mary Hawkins-- and inserts this person into the fictional story. The strict authority figure is killed in the story, thereby undermining the control of the RA. Simultaneously her name, even if misused, gives authority to the tale the students tell.



This may clarify the how and why of the Legend of Mary Hawkins, but it does not fully explain the longevity of the story. What is the relevance of this story for the present day? Several factors may contribute, the most obvious being the fun involved in first hearing and then telling the story. As with any news, there is a element of power or a strong sense of esteem gained in being the one in the know. The person having an interesting or fascinating story to share gains this sort of power from his or her audience. This goes back to Rodney Dale's assertion concerning the need in humans to be the bearers of such tales. In our society, despite television and movies, there still lives a need for exchanging information in storytelling performances.

Moreover, there is the fun in sharing a scary story. For a short period of time the teller of such scary stories is in command of another's emotions. The power is intensified when it is an older student telling a newcomer about the Legend of Mary Hawkins. For a brief period of time the teller holds the listener captive by relating the tale, and so experiences a certain power over the listener. In Pemberton Hall, this becomes like a traditional initiation rite, as the new student is accepted into the community of Pemberton Hall by learning the story. The ability given the older students to if not scare, then at least impress the younger student prevails through the passing on of ritual by the Pem-ites. One's ability to tell the story, moreover to have experienced the ghost and have a story to tell, is an important part of joining the community of Pemberton Hall.

The RA's at Pem Hall hold a distinction not held by other RA's across EIU's campus in being able to tell the women in the hall about the haunting of a ghost. They



can use the Legend of Mary Hawkins to impress, scare and warn residents of potential danger in being a victim of violence.

The Legend of Mary Hawkins bestows an honor or celebrated fame on Pem Hall. This reputation gives the women of the hall a bond unique among the students who take advantage of on-campus housing. It creates a common bond with a residence that others at EIU do not share. Others may tell the story, but Pemberton Hall residents have a unique understanding of that story.

The legend also contributes to the identity of those who work and attend school in Charleston, as well as others who live in the area. The distinction of having the association with Eastern Illinois University, by simply living in the close proximity of the dorm is a distinction that binds this extended group of folk forming an extension of community held by having the legend in common. Through identifying with Eastern and, by extension, with Pemberton, people outside the dorm also form a bond with those who live in the Hall and have encountered the ghost. Having a ghost in their midst makes them special.

## **Conclusions**

Folklorists experts including Jan Brunvand and Linda Degh, concur that the scenario of the "Roommate's Death" holds some valid functions for the folk group that it represents. It is clear that on Eastern's campus a variant of this same urban legend continues to live. The functions of the Legend of Mary Hawkins resemble closely those of the Roommate's Death. Despite the fact that secondary sources consulted and used in





this study are from ten to twenty years old, the data still reflect things have not changed in our society regarding the vulnerability of women. Women still see themselves as potential victims of crime. The Legend of Mary Hawkins clearly warns there is a very real reason for such anxiety. The moral of the story is believable enough in our society to apply it as a warning when the story is heard.

Women have made some staggering steps away from the expectations held for them in years past, but clearly have not come to the independent status of men in our society. Advancements have been made, but resistance against women becoming educated and "intelligent" still remain in our culture. The story still has an impact because there are still anxieties associated with women leaving the home, receiving a college education, and joining the work force.

While the Legend of Mary Hawkins states clearly that women can fall victim to violence, it offers a release of anxiety caused by such acts. The legend also helps to express fear about such moves to change, and gives women on Eastern's campus a vehicle to express such concerns without having to admit to having them. To tell the story helps to eliminate the pent up anxieties of leaving the safety of home, being thrust into new decision making processes, and being accountable for such decisions for perhaps the first time. In a wider sense, the legend exemplifies the anxiety and uncertainty any person might hold toward another. It suggests a dangerous in which anything can happen. There is a world around us over which we do not have complete control, and holds atrocities for those who leave the boundaries of what is deemed safe and appropriate by the majority of people.



Traditions of college life function today as they have in generations past. Such traditions as football games, pledging for sororities or fraternities, finals study parties and graduation are cherished by most students attending Eastern Illinois University. These activities are traditions of campus life. So is the Mary Hawkins Legend. Since the sixties, the Legend of Mary Hawkins has become a repeated story told to and by Penn Hall residents as well as other students familiar with campus life at the university. Alumni look back upon the story as a part of their college experience.

The Legend of Mary Hawkins provides a method by which Eastern is recognized to those in the general public. The media propagation of the legend certainly highlights the existence of an interesting event on campus, whether or not one believes in ghosts. The legend causes attention of the general public to be focused on Eastern's campus if only at Halloween, when ghost stories and haunting stories are more widely accepted. The Legend of Mary Hawkins provides wonder and entertainment to the community surrounding Eastern's campus. It contributes identity of everyone from an incoming first year student to alumni, to the President of the University, and provides enjoyable entertainment for those who hear it. Any story shared among people can contribute to forming a community, but the Legend of Mary Hawkins stands out by being able to give members of that community a particular identity by linking them to a particular time and place.

Finally, the Legend of Mary Hawkins forms and joins a select group of women with one common bond, developing a very viable community. This bond remains long after the student graduates and moves on to perhaps other cities and states. One alumna



attending Eastern in the early 1970's still recalls the stories she heard at the time she was a Pem-ite. She is still part of the community, held there by her memories of things that occurred over 25 years ago, and the fact that she had lived there while such stories were shared and the legend circulated. All of the women whether still living in the dormitory, or having graduated and gone on to careers or other aspects of their lives, remain part of a special community because of the Legend of Mary Hawkins. The unusual characteristic of living in the dormitory haunted by the ghost of Mary Hawkins a slain student, is held especially close by Pem Hall residents. Mary Hawkins is a celebrated legend, student/woman/ghost who boldly dared to step outside the norms of society, to receive something as unheard of as a college education in the early 1900s.



## Appendix A

The following includes a brief descriptions of the persons interviewed for this project.

Informant A at the time of the interview was a graduate student at Eastern Illinois University, majoring in English. This informant lived in Pemberton Hall during her stay at EIU.

Informant B lived in Pemberton Hall for three years during her stay at Eastern, and served briefly as a staff writer for the Decatur *Herald and Review* after graduation in 1984. She is currently employed in Mattoon, using her Journalism degree received at Eastern. She graduated from EIU in 1984.

Informants C through J were participants in a group interview which took place in Pemberton Hall during the Spring Semester of 1996. The informants are all female, all of them enrolled undergraduate students at EIU seeking various degrees in a diversified area of subjects.

Informants K and L are both male administrators who are employed by Eastern Illinois University.

Informant M is a female student currently attending Eastern. She is in her late 30's and is working towards her Bachelor degree in English. At the time of her interview in the spring of 1996, she was a student at Lake Land College in Mattoon, Illinois.

Informant N is a female alumna of Eastern Illinois University now living in Effingham, Illinois. She granted an interview during the spring of 1996.





Informant O is currently employed at EIU as Resident Director at Pem Hall. My interview with her took place in her office at Pem Hall during April of 1998.

Informant P is living in Charleston, Illinois. I interviewed this retired woman who gained her degree from Eastern beginning in the fall of 1944 during June of 1998 in her home. Her major was Business Education.



## Appendix B

### Interview Transcripts

Informant A  
June 1997  
Coleman Hall

Q: Give me what you know about the ghost of Pem Hall. If you could start kind've like how you heard about it. . . . .

Informant A: Well, I remember I knew about it before I moved in there. . . . . It was one of the things you learned about when you were a freshman. . . . . And then I moved over there. I never saw anything there, you know. I was in my sophomore year . . . . . And I tried to find something for a project, something that would substantiate . . . . .

Supposedly it happened in 1909. . . . . And you go through the papers and all you find is that there was a tornado that came through at that time. . . .

My friend Kate was an RA there at Pem. And the windows would open, the pressure would change and the windows would open on the fourth floor and they'd send RAs up there and Kate just did not want to go up there by herself. So Kate and my roommate, Laurie (?) and I went up there because they had a window open. It was on the fourth floor. First of all, you walked in and you could tell it was uninhabited. . . nobody lived there. There was old, gross, discarded furniture around and you could tell at this point that the walls were dry walled and painted, at least at one time they were. Informant A: Nobody ever went up there. Have you asked if you could go up there?

Q: I've been up *to* the door but I haven't been *in* the room.

Informant A: The padlock on the door kept me out! And that really irked me. I wanted to get in there, but there was no way with that big lock on the door.

Q: did you see a piano up there?

Informant A: There is a piano there. There really is and I don't know if that's how the whole story started — but the story I heard, and there *are* variations on it, but it was during Christmas vacation and there was a young lady up there playing piano and I don't know, she was bludgeoned or axed or strangled, and she managed to get down to the second floor where she died. That's what I heard. Don't know if that's the standard story or our variation of it.

And you go up there and you open this door and I was really scared. I was like, just don't leave me behind. I was very nervous about stepping on the floor. Everything was in really bad repair and I was like, Oh, you really want to *step* there? 'Cause you might go through. And the big room has a lot of light coming into it and in the hallway there there is a the piano and it does work because my roommate hit one of the keys and just about scared the hell out of me! But it *is* there and you know, it makes you wonder why they didn't bring it down. Pianos are fairly expensive, you know.

Q: Is it an upright?

Informant A: It's an upright. It's in bad repair, also, as is most of the furniture. It's not



furnished but you can tell that at one time. . . maybe they tried to make it a room, or something. And then, they got about mid-way in and they stopped working on it. So it's unfinished — bare rafters, bare walls.....and that is really kind've nerve wracking because you get that "ugh," weird kind of feeling. And spooked!!

And, it's funny 'cause you come to this area and there's all this chaos. . disorder. . . where they haven't done it . . . . but on the other side there, I think there are four or five really pretty small windows, with some ironwork in them, that hasn't been finished. Kind've a weird experience. You should try to get up there.

Q: Yeah, I'm going to try. What would be really neat is to take my video camera.

Informant A: Yeah!

Q: This story has circulated for many years, or that is what I'm finding.

Informant A: Has it?

Q: Yes.

Informant A: Have you found anything concrete in your research?

Q: Well, to start, there's never been a murder on this campus.

Informant A: Have you heard anything about the body?

Q: No

Informant A: I heard it . . . . when I moved in there, the girls were just talking about it. Nobody wanted to believe it but nobody wanted to *not* believe it. And it's real interesting. Apparently, this, I don't know, *thing* would come to the door and ask about her body and then be *gone*. I don't know if you've heard that but that's one of the things we were told. She comes to the door, apparently, or somebody does, and they are in a white robe, long hair. And she wants to know where her body is.

Q: Did you find that . . . you kind've alluded to this a minute ago . . . since this dorm was the only dorm that had this kind of lore about it. Did you find that that made a special association between the girls in the dorm?

Informant A: Actually, I don't really know if that affected the way we interacted with each other. I know that that was part of the reason we chose to live there — my roommate and I did. We will have a great sort of personal history to look back on. Things like that are interesting to us.

The reason for me was more of a struggling against the administration. . the RAs there were horrible. They call it the "virgin mall" and they call it that for a reason. The RAs that we had there were hard assed, hard core RAs. Ours wasn't. She was a friend of mine, but it was horrible, we were so mad . . . . we would provoke those RAs to no end.

I don't know if they retain a stricter order there because they want to hold to that tradition or what the deal is, but I don't know that that was a figure in any of our interactions.

Q: Mary, the one that was murdered, was real strict. Her rules said the girls had to be in at 7 o'clock in the evening, the curfew, they couldn't go to dances. Of course, in those days, the mores were a little different.

Also I needed to know what year you lived there.

Informant A: I lived there '93, '94. . . . .



Q: Okay, if you think of *anything* else, would you give me a call?

Informant A: Another thing I can remember about the Mary thing was. . . . It was so hot there. I lived in the new part, that's important to know. I didn't live in the old part. It was so *hot* there that we would all sleep with our doors open and the wind would slam the doors shut and we would say, "Dammit, Mary," and if something disappeared in the room, or we lost something, we'd say, "Dammit Mary." So, I guess, in a way, it was something that kind've infiltrated every aspect of life.

Q: Yes, some place to put blame. But you never *saw* her?

Informant A: No.

Q: I hear that a lot times, lights would go off and on, radios, electricity. . .

Informant A: Well, I don't know. I've heard stories from other people that this happened or that happened but it's an old dorm. I mean, and you can tell that things do not work well there. I had an old radiator that I'm surprised didn't kill us both. . . .

Personally I don't believe — I won't say that I don't believe in ghosts, because maybe I do, I don't know, but I don't believe that I ever saw anything there but maybe somebody else did. I don't know.

Q: But during the time that you were there you don't remember a sighting.

Informant A: No. Not that anyone came and said "Oh, I saw Mary." There were a lot of people that said they *heard* things on the third floor, but that could be because the RAs would take people up there all the time. . . . You could never tell if that was what it was. But occasionally they'd say, "Oh, God, I heard a piano last night," or "Oh, God, I heard footsteps up there," you know, stuff like that.

But I kind've think it was the RAs, too. Because the RAs were required, I think, to go up there, like once a day or something like that, to check it out.

Q: Because of the window?

Informant A: I don't know if it was the window or they had to check to see that anybody had gotten in there or what the deal was.

It is kind've funny, you know. You wonder why they don't use that space. Because Pem Hall's kind of cramped. They don't have a lot of rooms. I don't know. That could be, too. Just to keep it alive. The whole spooky thing.

Q: The story was published in a book. I first started researching this, and I thought a smart place to go would be the school paper but when I looked in a bound book with copies of the school newspapers, every copy that I had looked up on the computer was ripped off. It was cut out of the book.

Informant A: You're kidding!





Informant B  
September 23, 1997  
Sarah Bush Hospital

Informant B: Some background you really want: I lived in Pem for three years. And as you may know, Pemberton's the oldest dorm in Illinois - - - - - and it's built like - - - - -, it's a *castle*. And it's got — you know, there's no air conditioning — so you rely on the windows, huge windows and very heavy doors. So, this was in the Spring and the door would blow shut because of the vacuum in the halls - - - they would just blow shut. So we tended not to lock our doors for that reason because we would just be locked out.

We'd all, for years, heard about Mary, you know, but nobody had ever really had any experience with it outside what other people had passed on through the years. And it was after the third year and we just come to accept, yeah, maybe there is, maybe there isn't, but we'd just come to accept but we didn't really pay any attention to it.

So, anyway, I was up late studying and before I went to bed, I went down to the rest room and I came back and I thought, "Should I lock the door?" If I slammed the door, I'd have to slam it because the door was a little warped. If I slammed it, I'd wake my roommate up. So I *locked it* but I didn't slam the door. I thought, "If it locks, it locks. . . if it doesn't."

We lived in the first dorm room off the lounge area. And if you've been in Pem? You've maybe been over there, looked in there?

Q: Right.

Informant B: It's very open and people kind've come and go and there were never security issues

so we didn't think anything about leaving the door unlocked, at all.

So, anyway, I had gone to sleep and it was very late and I remember feeling like somebody was standing there and my back was to the middle of the room, I was facing the wall and I remember looking up and looking at the clock, and it had only been 20 or 30 minutes since I'd gone to bed.

And I turned over to look and the person - - - - - standing there - - - - - and they were just like in a robe. I didn't think anything about it. Like a robe. And at first I thought it was my roommate was up and was ill or something and I said, "What's wrong?" And the person walked to the door and held the door in their hand like they were walking out the door and I said "Don't shut the door, you're going to be locked out."

Q: Thinking it was your roommate.

Informant B: Yes. So, then the person left and I fell back to sleep and I didn't think anything more about it until the next morning and I said, "What was wrong last night?" And my roommate said, "What do you mean?"

So I reiterated the entire story to her and she said, "No, I didn't get out of bed."

We lived. . . we were the first room. The bathrooms were at the other end of the



hallway.

So everyone. . . you have to tramp down the hallway. The bathrooms were all fluorescent lit. There's no just going there half asleep. You would wake up. Definitely.

So the next day, we talked about this a little bit and I said, "Well, there was somebody in our room."

And at that point, a girlfriend of mine across the hall — she had two roommates, she had a triple and it was a big room — and she said that she'd gotten up on three occasions during the night to close the door because it was opened. It was very unusual that your door would blow open because of the vacuum that was created, so they just didn't do it. Our door, I guess, would have to be open for her door to blow open. There would have to be enough wind across. And there wasn't. So it was very odd.

Then the girl next to her said the same thing had happened in her room as well, that she'd woke up several times during the night and other times as well.

So then we're like hmmmmmm. And, you know, I don't think that it was just somebody walking around the dorm. I would say the majority of people on our floor probably did not lock their doors at night. Very trusting. We don't think it was any person walking around. I think those of us who've had that experience felt pretty confident that it wasn't a person but maybe a spirit. Nothing to be afraid of, but . . .

Q: You didn't sense fear or anything..

Informant B: No.

Q: You just went back to sleep?

Informant B: Yeah. Didn't feel fear at all.

Q: What year was this?

Informant B: It was in the Spring of '81. I graduated in '82.

Q: And had you heard about Mary before this? She's known as Mary.

Informant B: Yes.

Q: How were you first made aware of this?

Informant B: Pretty much the first week I was in the dorm as a freshman, they told us about Mary. And another friend of ours did a little research. The story — well, you know the story. There's a lounge on the fourth floor which is no longer in use. And when they upgraded the dorm, they never went as far as to upgrade the fourth floor for habitation. But there was a lounge on the fourth floor.

And the story goes that Mary was a the hall counselor and she was playing the piano upstairs and a custodian axed her in the neck. That's the story. And for probably the three years when I was there, Eastern had a haunted house and it was in Pem's fourth floor. And so that was the big attraction, the fourth floor. And I don't know whether there are actual stains — people say there are. I was never up there to actually see it. I never investigated. . . Always felt, I don't need to . . . I gotta live here, I'm not going to scare myself..

Q: Right.

Informant B: So, anyway, that's kind've it.

A girlfriend of ours did a little investigation, seeing where Mary died. There's a plaque on the inside of the dorm, I think it's in the lounge or near the front entrance that



has a little . . . thing about Mary. And she was a hall counselor and she did indeed die. But our girlfriend determined that she didn't die there in the dorm but she did die in an insane asylum.

The dorm was built in the first decade of the 1900's, and it wasn't long after that, she was there, so . . .

Q: And now, can you recall your experience of first hearing about her . . . who first passed the tale on to you?

Informant B: Our RA.

Q: How did she tell you? In a meeting, or was it just like conversationally?

Informant B: Well when she told us about it — I don't know whether this is true or not — but she said the RAs are in the building for several days before the students arrive, and there's one hall counselor in the old wing of the dorm, had this shirt that she'd wear every day. She'd wash it and put it back on. And she had her hangers — you know how you hang things up like this — her hangers were backwards in her closet. She thought, well, they're just pranking each other, trying to spook each other 'cause there's only five women in the entire building. But she told us the story about it, elaborated on what happened while they were there that week, because it scared everybody. [Everyone is told] Don't go up to the fourth floor. You can *walk* up to the fourth floor, but the doors are chained shut.

Q: Which adds a little intrigue.

Informant B: Yes and she told us that when they're on duty they have to check those locks each night, make sure they continue to be locked.

And we would prank each other, you know, especially around Halloween — we went up one night and put up this little ghost thing, little sheet, because she was on duty. I don't know if she ever did go up there.

Q: Did you know, from your being there — what function did the story serve? Was there a function, or was it just fun?

Informant B: I don't really think it serves any function. I just think it adds to the intrigue of the building. There's Old Main — there's those three first buildings: Old Main, Blair, maybe Student Services, that's what used to be Student Services.

Q: Right.

Informant B: And there used to be passage ways under ground to other buildings on campus so you didn't have to go out in bad weather.

Q: Underground? Like tunnels? I didn't know that.

Informant B: Yes. And I think the tunnels still exist, but you can't get to them from Pem, anymore.

And there's — you know where the textbook library is — that used to be the gymnasium, and so in Pem, if you're coming out one of the back doors that face the inside of campus, if you kept going on the stairs, you would go to the textbook library. But that's been blocked. Adds to the character of the building. It has so much character, it's not like Carmine Hall or any others. It's a nice old structure and I think with those things you'd have to expect some kind of tales to go with it.

Q: So do you think that you believed it before you had your visitation. . .



Informant B: Well, I have to say that I think I was open to the idea that there could be spirits. I think everybody has to be able to be open to that before they can actually experience anything. And I suppose anybody could discount what I've said by saying, "Yeah, it could've been any number of things. And yes, it *could* have been. But everybody was well aware of what happened but nobody had anything to say about it.

I think that after I felt like I'd seen Mary, or after I had this experience, that if someone mentioned to me that yes, there *are* spirits out there —.

A few years later, maybe five or six years later, I was working at the newspaper and it was Halloween. I was talking to a gal at work, and she tells me the name of this lady who lives kind've in my neighborhood, now. She said her house is haunted. So I called her and asked her if she'd do an interview and she said, "Sure." And she told me about the haunting of her house. It's a friendly ghost and she told me about the different things that have happened. And after the story ran in the paper, about a month later, I received a letter from an older woman who had lived in the house during the war, while her husband was at war. And she and she had experienced the exact same things. So I think that you have to be able to accept that there are other things out there besides us.

Q: You say Mary is a friendly ghost. What do you think she was coming to your room for that night?

Informant B: I don't know.

Q: A lot of the information I've gotten from the dorm, a lot of information, say that it's her way of watching out for her girls.

Informant B: Checking on you, you know. Just kind've checking to make sure everything's okay.

Q: I want to go up there, I thought it would be neat, from my point of view, to add to my thesis. And I've never lived in a dorm, so. . . I know there was a gentleman from Decatur, William Michael, I think his name is, spent the night there. I wasn't able to track him down. I guess he did spend the night but didn't have any visitations or anything.

Informant B: Yes, I think he said he had some women prank him.

Q: Yes, he said in the article that the only visitors he had were dorm residents who asked, "Did you see anything?"

Pemberton Hall Residents

Informants C - J

Spring 1996

Pemberton Hall

Informant C: I'll go first. My name is. . . , I've lived in Pem Hall this entire year. Yet I've been to this school about three years ago. I had a friend who came to this school, and I heard alot of stories, but my first story I heard was from her. She told me alot of the same stories you've probably heard, like someone was murdered on the fourth floor with piano strings, but then I got here my sophomore year in August. The RA told us a more accurate version. . that





someone had died, but no body really died. Mary Hawkins was a counselor here, the way she told it was that she was here to protect us. Mostly I heard she was here to make sure everyone was doing what they should, and she wasn't here to do harm. That she was our protector, and I thought, "Ok, that is good. I can live with that."

First I need to go back to my past. I grew up in a very bad neighborhood. I've always believed that. . . when I was 6 years old I came this close to being shot by a bullet and I believe very strongly that there is some kind of spiritual force that is here to protect me. I believe there is a spirit that is here. So when I first got here, I began looking for signs of her, but then I thought, "No, that might not happen."

Then one day, there was this guy, and he is not a very nice guy at all. And it started off as friends, and I didn't know too many people at all, but the people that I did know, they were all guys. They were all guys, and this guy thought I couldn't be friends with them, like he had the wrong impression. . . he thought that I wanted to go out with him and stuff like that. He said I couldn't be friends with these guys. So I kinda got mad, because he was telling me what to do.

And for some reason. . . my. . . the room that I have. . . my phone is way on the right hand side of the room, and as he was turning around, and the phone cord . . . it just shot all the way to the desk, and it tripped him. And to this day, I firmly believe that was Mary who went and tripped him just to piss him off.

That was my first encounter with Mary. And then later . . . some time later my cd's. . . I swear to god she doesn't like one of my songs, and I put the song on and she skips right over it. It isn't like it is anything else. I gave the tape to someone else in another hall, and I can hear it, without it being skipped at all.

Q: What is the name of the song?

Informant C: I. . . I don't remember. . . its a good cd. And then there's things that people don't quite think of Mary. Like, sometimes my computer comes on and off. It just - - - and I hear stories of peoples door locking on them. (Laughter) But that is all I have.

Q: Ok.

Informant D: — my first year. I'm a freshman.

My contact with Mary was, I was watching — I was using the computer and the TV was on and a friend was over and I thought she doing something with the remote control because the TV started flipping through the channels and the remote control was across the room. And I'm like, "Quit moving the channel. I'm watching the channel!" and the remote was across the room changing the channels. And my door's locked twice on me when I lived upstairs before I moved down to the pit with a different type of lock.

Q: What do you mean, it locked twice?

Informant D: Well, neither one of us had locked the door with the key or the padlock, but we came back we tried to open it but it locked. We came back and the door was locked.

Q: And in the old section, it's harder for the door to lock when you pull it shut because you have to flip the lock with the key. It's not like ones in the new section you can just keep it locked.

Informant D: That was in the old section. Now I live in the new section.



Q: So, she locked you out?

Informant D: She locked me out, yeah. I wasn't happy because I had to pay to get in.

Q: You mean a locksmith?

Informant D: No, you have to go down to the desk and pay a dollar to get the spare key to come up and open the door with it. Another time I went to the bathroom and came back and it was locked. It could have been my room mate, but I don't think so. She wasn't around.

My name's Informant E. I am a senior here, lived here all four years.

I heard the same story as Informant C did, but the first story I heard of Mary was that there was a ghost living in Pemberton Hall, but she's a good ghost and what she does — if you ever see her, she has a long, white robe but no feet. This is what I was told, I don't know. And long hair like this long hair.

And what she does is that at night she peeks into your keyhole to see that you are in there sleeping because there used to be, like curfews because there used to be strict rule at Pemberton Hall and so the ghost is enforcing them. And it used to scare me so bad, in my freshman year, I was so freaked out. And I heard the bad stories after that.

Somebody was murdered in the pit by the meat lockers, and in the Hall.

Q: Where are the meat lockers?

Informant E: Down in the basement. It's a really eery looking place. I can see how something like that would've started.

Q: Is it a place where they used to store meat?

Informant E: They still do. Its for food services. I've been told that somebody's been chased down there. I've heard so many stories.

I've also heard of people walking into Pemberton Hall and people looking up to the fourth floor where Mary is, I guess, supposed to be all the time, I heard of people seeing her in the window. Nothing major has happened to me.

I've been locked out of my room, me and my roommate both, with our keys, *both* our keys in the room. We had to pay, though. My pillows have fallen off my bed. I don't know. I don't know how to describe it.

We've had computers shut on and off screen on and off and stay off for a long time and then all of a sudden come back.

Q: At the same time your computer shuts down, are there glitches elsewhere?

Informant E: No. The computer screen just went blank and it went on and off.

Q: You'd know about that because you're in the computer lab.

Informant E: Sometimes at the same time the lights are flashing. And we hear noises, but that could be. . .

Q: What kind of noises?

Informant E: When I lived on the third floor, I always heard things, like moving up on the fourth floor. I don't know if it was like animals up there, because things get up there all the time. But I mean I always heard weird things.

But now that we're on the second floor, I just automatically assume it's whoever is living above me, you know, moving around and stuff. I'd hear things moving across the floor. . .things sliding across the floor.



Q: No one can be on the fourth floor. Right?

Informant E: Right. It's padlocked. No one is allowed in there, no one can get into that room.

Q: I wouldn't say that. People *have* gotten up there.

Informant E: well, yea, and right now our counselor is trying to figure out *how* people have gotten up there.

Q: But it's off limits. Right?

Informant E: Some people go up there to work, sometimes. You can go up there but you can't go in the door.

Q: There's a man, who wrote for the Decatur Herald. He spent the night up there, I guess. And the only experience he had was that the smell of the musty couch he was on woke him up, or something. It was a rainy night in October and he was waiting for her to come and visit him. But it was a no show.

Informant E: I can't honestly say that I've ever seen her but I've had friends that have seen her. I know of a guy that saw her. Yes. I don't know if he's a credible source but -  
- - - -

Q: You know stories about people having actually seen her?

Informant E: Yes, well, I know um, Emily. Her and Ann both did. She was on the phone late at night but she was facing, like the beds were against the wall. She was facing the wall and it was like 3 o'clock in the night and she went over to hang up the phone and on the *wall* they just saw the shadow, like *go by*. Like as soon as they turned, it just *went by*.

Q: And they both saw it?

Informant E: They both saw it. I mean it wasn't like just *one*, they both saw it. She had enough after that, I think that's the reason she moved out, because of that.

Q: Is there any way I can get in touch with Emily?

Informant E: Oh, sure. She coming through - - - - - She's been on the top bunk - - - - - and she saw the bed and somehow, the pillows were there. The pillows weren't there, before - - - - - The pillows were on the floor. She fell on the pillows. And she fell, and she landed, like two feet away from the bed - - - - -

Q: Wow. . . . Emily - - - - -

Informant E: Yeah, I can give you her phone number. She'll tell you *anything*.

Also, in my freshman year I lived in a triple(?) - - - - - and my roommate on the bottom bunk, for like two weeks *straight*, she kept feeling somebody touch her cheek. Just *felt* something touch her cheek.

Informant E: Yeah! And it happened to *me*. It was in August. It was hot and I had no covers on and I was wearing a t-shirt and I felt something go right over me. It was when I first moved in Pemberton and I was in the top bunk and I had the room to myself and . . .

And when I got a roommate, she saw the same thing. On my bunk bed, away from the window and if I looked up, there was no way I could figure a light coming in the window, but if I looked up there was like an arm, like this, pointing at a ball of light coming in the window. It was the only other light. The hand and the arm. And it was



freaking me out.

Q: When was that?

Informant F: It was when I first moved in. And then it disappeared. And we cannot figure out how - - - the shades drawn and everything. And all my friends came in - - - and they saw it

Q: And what is your name? Informant F. And yours? Informant J

Informant F: It was like a hand and an arm made out of light. From the elbow up, the finger pointing at a ball of light.

Q: On the wall.

Informant F: No. On the *bed*. Underneath the top bunk, so right above me where I was asleep. So right above me where I was asleep. At my head. I went to the other end and it wasn't there.

Q: Did you ever go back?

Informant F: Yes. I figured it was just the light from outside but then about a month later, it was gone.

Q: What room was that?

Informant F: That was 204.

Q: We'll do a little sleuthing (laughter).

Informant J: Ever have the feeling that somebody's watching? Okay, this is where I feel it all the time: When I go down to the laundry room down in the basement and I'm by *myself* in that room, I feel like everything in the world . . . Q: What's your name?

Informant G: I have a single and when I'm just in my room. . .-and I'm not by any window and I'm sitting there and I feel like somebody's sitting there watching me do my homework, making sure I have it done, or something.

Informant J: It's nothing like *evil*!

Informant G: No. I feel it's like somebody's checking up on me. - - - - -

I was laying down in my bed, late one night, trying to go to sleep. My light's on, no big deal, I'll turn it off, whatever, no big deal. I laid there, closed my eyes and when I opened my eyes, my lights were off. And stayed off. And it wasn't just a little flip thing, it was the one that you have to push in. And it was across the room from where my bed is. I know I didn't turn it on 'cause I laid down and closed my eyes and I opened them and it wasn't even a minute on the clock.

And I've had my stereo turn on — and it's one that you have to turn from one side to the other — and it turned on and it played a song and then it turned right back off.

Q: Oh, I have such an analytical mind I'd have to find a reason why!

Informant G: It didn't bother me, I was just like, Okay, because I was thinking, maybe I should get up and turn it on. Because I was sitting on my bed doing my homework and thinking, maybe I should get up and turn it on. No, I need to keep going. And it came on and went right back off.

Q: Kind've like the same thing with the lights, I should probably turn those off. Kind of like cooperating with you.

Informant G: Yes! She's always looking out for you. Honestly. She's there to protect.

Q: And you don't feel frightened?





Informant G: No, I think she's going to come and *protect* me. One of the stories I heard, we didn't say this part: up on the fourth floor, there's the one about the person that was strangled and I heard that on the wall above, there was "help me," or something. But I went up there because we were looking for a mirror and there was nothing there.

Yeah, people have been up there, you can tell. People have written on the wall. You can tell that people were up there. We were just up there a week later than somebody else was — and they weren't supposed to be up there. But it would be a nice place if they would finish it. If they've got the money.

Informant F: Pemberton Halloween last year, talking about Mary and one of the stories was that two girls were on the first floor in their room and it was like 12 midnight and they stared at the clock and he clock went forward to 12 a.m. and then back to 12 p.m. And something else happened. . . the telephone flew across the room and the door would shut and the lights would flick on and off .

Q: Are they current residents?

Informant E: I don't know who they were, exactly . . . they're my next door neighbors.

Q: I heard a story, I think you (Informant I) told me before, that there was a fire in this building at one time.

Informant F: No. I heard something about a rape. I heard that Mary had people from the sanitarium come and clean and one of the guys was nuts. This girl liked to play the piano up on the fourth floor and her name wasn't Mary, but this one guy was really nuts and he didn't like her playing the piano and that's why he killed her. And then ever since then, Mary felt sorry, so she watches over us so that will never happen again. She didn't want to see that guy coming. She felt sorry for bringing him here.

Informant J: I never heard that one. . .

Informant I: I did. . . I remember hearing about a rape.

Informant E: I heard another one, it is scary. It was right across the Pemberton Hall and it was Spring break and everyone was going home and there was just two girls left in the dorm, plus the counselor. And they were downstairs waiting for their rides. And one of the girls had to go to the bathroom

and she went upstairs to her room. . . it was either second or third floor in the "old."

And her roommate was downstairs, couldn't figure where she was, because she was gone for over an hour. So she went upstairs to their room and she thought, oh, she's in the bathroom, so she went into the bedroom and she didn't lock the door or anything but like two hours later she opens the door and her roommate was there, dead. And she had, like a bloody hand on the door and they guessed that somebody had like a janitor was still in the building and had killed her. And she'd been pounding on the door for hours. And Star(?) Dawn told me this and she said, "And this is right across the Pemberton Hall from you and sometimes you can see a bloody hand on the door when you're walking down the Pemberton Hallway." But that's never happened.

Q: And Dawn?

Informant F: Dawn was actually. She lives on second in the old still. She works in computing again, too. But that was the first one I'd ever heard and I thought, I've gotta



find out the real story and the real story was scary. Pretty scary.

Informant H: Well, my name is. . . I collect these stories. I have them from a couple other schools - - - and I always try to get all the different versions and find the most accurate. And the first I heard about this was at orientation, before my freshman year.

And somebody said "Pem Pemberton Hall, ghost on the fourth floor" and I was like, really!!!! (laughter) so we got there and Sidney Jones . . . she doesn't live here, anymore . . . some people didn't like her. . . well, she told a couple of us the story that Informant E told, that there was a girl left here over break just her roommate and a counselor of Pemberton Hall, and she went upstairs to play the piano on the fourth floor and a nutty janitor beat her to death. And she crawled downstairs and died in the Pemberton Hallway — scratched on the door. And, no kidding, sometimes when I walk past the door I look for scratches. . . (laughter) that is the story that we tell freshmen to freak them out!! But here's the *real* story and I'll go into that. Jennifer, who lived right next door to me. . . she and I heard the story, you might want to go up to the fourth floor and try to look in through the window and try to see. . . you can't really see in a little bit. You kind of face the door like this and you might be able to see a little bit.

We're going up and we got about half way up that last flight of stairs and we're grabbing each other's arms at this point because we're getting a little scared, and she leaned over and looked in and *screamed* and ran down the stairs! And I was so freaked out, so scared. (Laughter, overlapping voices) When I was on my way down the stairs, she screamed, "There's somebody in there, somebody *looking!*" Later we told her, we said, "it was you. . . you probably saw a reflection of your own eyes!" I couldn't believe how scared that made me.

After that, later on I decided to do some research, or whatever, and found out that nobody died here. She told me that a janitor had died here. But I couldn't find any articles or any proof that anyone died here.

Informant J: I heard a counselor's husband had a heart attack on the second floor landing and Mary didn't go to for help. Oh, I heard they took him to the hospital. But I heard that he actually died here. I mean, no one was *murdered*.

Q: Do you know what year that was?

Informant H: Okay this would have been in the early or middle 1900's. . somewhere around there. I did a little research on this for a paper: She died in the early 20's and he would've died while she was still here, between 1910 - 1917.

Q: What was her name? Do you know?

Informant H: Her name was Mary Hawkins and it was her husband.

Q: Okay, and it was her husband.

Informant H: Yeah. Some people say that she like had to go to the loony bin for awhile. But I guess she had a breakdown and had to go for in a week. For a week. And then she came back.

Informant H: Lots of people come here from 3 to 4 in the morning, you know to look around and to see. . . and a lot of other people are afraid to be here. One time a couple of big strong guys came here to see what it was about, and were freaked out!! (Laughter) One guy, he's been in the Army, he did *not* like sitting in this building. At night. Just



did NOT like it. He planted himself in that chair and he would stay there.

And there was night I sitting in that chair at the bottom of the stairs and thinking about that story that somebody died on first floor landing and it was a real windy day and these windows, they swing out and the windows *FLEW* open, a gust of wind went through. . . I thought it might be Mary. . . (laughter) and they were. . . making the doors. . . they were swinging . . . swinging back and forth and I was on my feet and. . . Oh! My God! And I didn't want to go back up to that landing even after I realized it was only the wind.

Informant I: And it's just things like that. You'll hear a whisper, and you're not sure if it's somebody whispering at you or if it's a heater going off. With the doors. . . the doors in the old section have dead bolts on them. Eventually I've figured out that this dead bolt, if you don't. . . it's wobbly and

Informant H: We did figure out that if you don't turn it all the way, when you close the door, sometimes the vibration will click it the other way. Because we *never* locked our doors. That was what was weird.

Informant E: There was one story I heard. I don't know how accurate this is, but someone told me about an RA awoke in the middle of the night. . . she had like, an inexplicable desire to come downstairs. Came downstairs and walked in there and all the furniture was turned sideways. And she left to go get somebody to help her put it back and two minutes later when she came back, all the furniture was turned right, again. Then there is the stories that sometimes people sneak in and put like chalk lines in the carpeting, and they'll write "Mary" or something creepy on the wall.

Informant I: I was up on the fourth floor once. This guy. . . we were talking inventory and this guy from the physical plant had to come look at all the ceilings. So I had to take him through the building and show him all the ceilings.

We went up to the fourth floor and I just went right in with him and it just looks like an attic. No walls. Well there are a couple walls but . . . I guess they ran out of money when they were building it. And they can't have anybody past the stairway because of a fire hazard. There is an old piano up there. . . But I was on duty here one night, here and I heard a piano. It was like 2 in the morning and I heard a piano playing and I like, Oh my God, oh well, it's probably just a resident. . . and then this cop walks in. He's telling me he is there to check the building but he really came into scare me. I was like, "Thank you! You're *really* doing your job!"

Informant H: she really did used to look in the keyhole. She really used to be really manic about making all the girls cleaning their rooms. . . be in by curfew, act like ladies. . .

Informant I: She'd come in and [she'd say] "You're up past curfew, and you're not doing da-da-da-da, and you have to clean your room up."

Q: So these are stories passed down to you?

Informant H: No, this is the real deal — about how strict she was. I read a book about the early days of school.

Informant H: Well, we have it in our constitution, about the old rules, like what girls



had to follow. . . and you can look at that, if you like.

Q: Okay.

Informant H: That would be like what she would have followed.

Q: Her rules.

Informant H: There was a thing about it in the year book, last year about strict rules of the dining service . . . about the way back then. . . that the girls had to wear such long dresses, and there was a story about the ghost and. . .

Q: I saw the one on the ghost, not the rules. . . Now things like that, the archives that you're talking about, would I be able to take them, get copies?

Informant H: You can go to the library and get all copies of all the Daily Eastern News, 1915 . . . that's how I did it. Also, if you go downstairs, there's this little history guy in a little office — crowded to the ceiling. He has old yearbooks back to about 1920.

Q: Okay, where is that?

Informant H: It's in our library in the stacks downstairs. But the Daily Eastern News stuff, it's in the Reference section, you know, upstairs.

Q: Right.

Informant H: And they'll show you where the catalog is for that. And there's also a book there, I don't remember what it's called, but it's by (unintelligible). It's about Mr. Lord and it mentions Mary Hawkins. And there's another one about the first fifty, seventy-five years - - - - - of the school and it mentions Mary.

Q: Do you know the title of the first fifty, seventy-five years?

Informant H: I think it's The Early Years . . . The First Fifty Years . . . I don't know.

Q: And they're in the stacks?

Informant H: They're in the library, yes.

Q: Okay, now, you were going to say. . .

Informant I: Yea, well this is my first year here. And I'm in a "triple" and usually I sleep in there but the one weekend one my roommate went home, and my other roommate and I were sleeping and the radio - - and like usually you have to flip a lot of switches to make it go on and we hadn't been able to tune in any stations and we were sleeping like 4 or 5 in the morning and all of a sudden our radio turned on really LOUD and it came in clearer than we've ever heard it, before.

And we jumped up and we couldn't figure out what it was and our radio was on the floor — it had been sitting on the floor. And, like I said, you had to flip a couple buttons to get it to go on and we had NO idea how it got on. And we were scared. And the only thing we thought of was like she said, Mary looks in the keyholes and she was trying to alert us that our other roommate wasn't there, and she was trying to wake us up or something. - - - - -

My other roommate heard a story that two girls were walking into the laundry room and they were passing the lockers and it was warm and they looked up and there were all these like white clouds. . . and a cold breeze. . . and they saw this figure like Mary and all of a sudden it was warm again.

Nothing's ever happened — at first I was scared to walk down to the laundry room but now I've gone down there like 5 in the morning and never seen a thing. But





there's something in the laundry room its like, like sometimes the laundry doesn't get dry. Like something is down there that keeps everything really cool, damp and cold.

Q: Oh, really?

Informant I: there'll be like a really cold breeze. . . and the windows will all be shut. Really cold breeze . . . just in the laundry room, I think.

Q: You can justify it all these ways when you want to be reasonable, but. . .

Informant F: You'll be in a meeting and a window will fly open and, I hope it's just the wind. . . . it's a standing joke, here in Pem like, "I hope it's just the wind. . . ."

(Laughter)

Okay, your pillows were on the bed, now they're on the floor — no big deal . . . you might have turned over or something. But then there are other things, like the lights that you have to push to turn them on, they just flick on and . . . no one has touched the switch.

Informant F: The clock, the radio and the door slams shut and there's no breeze and the windows are shut.

Q: So now, which part? There's the old part and the new part. And the old part. And you guys all live in the old part?

Informant H: Mary doesn't come to the new section very often. Unintelligible . . . overlapping voices. . . because we don't have keyholes. She won't go there because she can't see. It was built in like 1968. It wasn't here when she was. Some people say she goes over there to see what it's like. It wasn't there for her. She wants to know what it's doing there. Why are people living there

Informant F: But the meat lockers were in the old.

Informant I: Right. The meat lockers are underneath Food Service. The meat lockers are right there where the double doors are. There must be old scrapbooks in there and some of them are. . . more than 20 years . . .

Q: Let's do the tour and I really appreciate you all sharing!



Informant M

Q: Okay, Informant M: . . . I'd like to hear you experience with Mary, the ghost of Pemberton Hall when we were going to Hardee's on Thursday, I think it was last Thursday when we were riding to school together.

Informant M: Well, we were going down Lincoln and we were talking about it and you said it was on the fourth floor and I looked up in that last window, and I saw, it looked like a person standing there with white on. But I could just see like shoulders and like a robe or a gown or something, but I couldn't see a head or anything. I could just see like a form in the window. And that's what I saw.

Q: Did it move?

Informant M: Yeah. It looked like it moved. And then when we pulled in there, when I let you out, I saw it again and it moved. And then I didn't see it.

Q: And that was on the fourth floor.

Informant M: Yeah, in that last window, in that corner window.

Q: And at the time you said it looked like a human form but you didn't see it move. And what do you think it was?

Informant M: I don't know. I really don't know.

Q: And after you dropped me off, and you went back by, did you look again?

Informant M: No, No I didn't look again because I wasn't really safe where I could because it was facing Lincoln and I was on. . . Fourth and so I didn't look back.

Q: So that's what I wanted to know. I just wanted your input.



Informants K and H  
April 22, 1998  
EIU Administration Office

Q: At what point, coming to Eastern, did you hear about the ghost of Pem Hall, if you did?

Informant K: Well, let's see, I don't remember. It must've been in first few months I was here.

Q: And were you told how it happened or just that there was a ghost there?

Informant K: Somebody said there's a ghost. And I don't remember when I heard these various things.

But, first I heard there was a ghost and then I heard there was a spirit of a girl who'd been murdered and then later I heard that she'd been murdered by an employee. That was about it.

I'll tell you a little anecdote: A couple of years ago (I have a boy who's 12 now) maybe it was 3 or 4 years ago, we were walking across campus, with my wife, and near Pemberton Hall, I said to him, 'There's a ghost there. It's known as the ghost of Pemberton Hall,' and I told him a little bit about it. And afterward (the word Pemberton didn't mean anything to him), he started referring to it as the ghost of Peppermint Hall. (Laughter)

Q: And I also wanted to know that if in your travels and your meeting with people, do they say, 'Oh, I hear you got a ghost on your campus.'

Informant K: Oh, sure. A great many times over the years. That's a long and sort've affectionate story that people tell. I've met people that graduated from here in the 20's, and *they* talk about it.

And you know it — I don't want to say it was common — but my wife's mother attended Eastern and I've looked through her yearbooks from the 1920's and people didn't have all that we have now, so it wasn't all that uncommon for people to die of influenza or something like that . . . they just didn't have the medical care we have. So, I remember in her yearbook, every so often you'd see a picture of a girl who died in Pemberton Hall, which was the only residence Pemberton Hall we had for a long time. So, you wonder, sometimes, if those two things didn't get crossed. Because even now days we have two or three kids who are killed, now, then they die from, say from meningitis. Back then, they probably had *at least* as many people die from a much smaller population, so everybody would have known the person. It would have been meaningful. . .

Q: It would have been real unusual for it to have been murder....

Informant K: That's right.

Q: One more thing . . . when you're traveling about business for Eastern, do you ever tell the story, yourself?

Informant K: Oh, sure.

Q: In what capacity is that?



Jorns Well, you see, to me it's one of those traditions that a campus that really has a history or tradition, and I think it's important that we accentuate that. But it's one of those traditions that I like to emphasize. There are some others here, there's the dog that's buried out here. The governor. . . dog used to play around his house. The dog used to walk across the stadium at commencement, walk into class rooms.

They had at one time, some fellow who did practical jokes — I've forgotten what they were — hang a huge sheet off McAfee Gym or something like that. Or they'd go up and steal the clock, so you know, the school's full of traditions like that.

By the way, there are a couple of books, which I have at home, which were written by historians. One is Dr. Lord (?) And his time here and another is the history of Eastern up through 1974. And there's another, smaller one. And then I noticed the student paper a couple years ago did a story on the ghost.

Q: I have most of those clippings but if I e-mailed you, could you e-mail me those titles?

Informant K: Sure. Have you been over the archives and looked up?

Q: Yes.

Informant K: I've got them. I'll you borrow them.

Q: I'd like to do that.

Informant K: You hear a lot of stories.

Q: And then there's Burl Ives, I guess there's a file on him over at Pem You see him climbing out of the window, early one morning.

Informant K: He wasn't the only one. . . Jim Roberts, who — he was the longest living — he was the editor of the paper longer than any other student still living. Jim's in his seventies, now. Jim got caught climbing out of Pem Hall.

Q: A tradition, there!

Yes, it's interesting. I'd never heard of the ghost until I took Dr. Irwin's class and then I started digging. And it's been really interesting.

Informant K: *It is* interesting. And school still has some — Have you talked to some of the older people who've worked here, years and years ago?

Q: No, I haven't. Bonnie, Dr. Irwin is going to put me in touch with her landlady, who was a resident at Pem Hall in the past. And I've talked to previous students around my age who attended here right out of school. And Informant B, who saw Mary and wrote an article in the paper about it. So that helps spread the lore.

Informant K: You know a guy who's been here 30 years . . . have you talked to Informant L? He's the Vice President, Student Affairs. He'll be coming in here in a few minutes of you just want to wait for him and talk to him. He could probably give you the name of some of the older administrative teachers who've been here and worked over at Pem Hall.

He knows all the things that are probably worth knowing. So just stick around.

Informant L: When I arrived on campus in 1966, there was a rumor about the ghost. And the idea generated — there were two factors that really continued to make it go. . . the first of which was the fact that there was a rumor going around that a girl had been





killed at Pem Hall over the Easter or Spring break, whatever the case might be. And got killed by a crazed janitor, was the way I heard it and that her ghost still continues to be there. And this rumor was fueled because of the fact that the fourth floor is closed, okay, and the rumor continues that that's where the murder took place.

Well, in actuality, we can find nowhere in our records that there ever was anyone killed. And the fourth floor was closed because when the place was built in 1908, they ran out of money. That's the best thing we can determine. So, if you go up on the fourth floor . . . we'd like to take you up there — you'll find that the fourth floor is unfinished. The whole floor is unfinished.

But it makes for nice rumors and then you get things like, the RAs one time had their picture taken standing on the stairwell. Somebody came in and they took a picture. When the picture came back, there was a big flash — there was a flash where one of them . . . so it's like, here was the ghost! You know, it's like, here's the seven people, and here were the RAs and here's the ghost.

Who can you talk to? Actually, I can't think of anybody who was here — well, maybe some of the older faculty members who were on campus. The woman who used to be the Director of Financial Aid, she lives in town. And Katherine Smith.

There aren't that many people here, unfortunately. People say that but there aren't many people here that have been here longer than I have been.

Q: You know — right on the spot. If things came to you . . . maybe if I could e-mail you. . .

Informant L: Well, I'm just trying to think, here. Most the people, for example in Student Affairs, I'm the oldest person, I mean the longest working here.

Maxine. Maxine Clayton might be one. Executive Secretary.

Oh, I know another one: Norma Winkleblank. She was the Executive Secretary here before Maxine. She worked for every president except Laurent(?) and she lives here in town on Fourth Street. Her husband's name is Bob.

Maxine will be in my office, tomorrow. Her number is 3221.

I think if you talk to those folks, they can give you as much — especially the last two. Norma lives at 402 Fourth Street Number there . . .

To give you an idea, though. At one time, when I was the Director of Housing, we had two ghost stories. We had a girl that was assigned to Pemberton Hall and she just didn't want to go. And, you know, all her friends lived there. She wanted to be with her friends, so I took her on the tour and everything else. She ended up living there but I think she was a little nervous about living there.

And the second ghost story has to do with Residence Pemberton Hall Association every year had a haunted house. I said, I've got a great thing for you — make a lot of money — we'll open the fourth floor for you and you can put all your scary stuff up there.

Well, I didn't know how it was going to go, but I thought it would go pretty well. Well, I parked down at the Housing Office which was at the Union and I came up the walk that way and I noticed there was a line by McAfee(?) And the line stretched all the way from Pemberton Hall back to McAfee and this was like 30 minutes before it even



opens. And it was one of the most popular things they did and people loved it, just to be able to go up there. It was a neat thing to do.

But we couldn't do it any more, because what happened — all that weight on the fourth floor — it wasn't properly supported, and some of the rooms on the third floor, the ceilings began to crack.

Q: Okay, you've been a great help. I appreciate this.



Informant M Interview  
April 4, 1996  
Casey, Illinois

Q: Ok, I'd like to hear your experience with Mary, the ghost of Pemberton Hall. When we were going to Hardee's on last Thursday...when we were riding to school together.

Informant M: Well, we were going down Lincoln Avenue and we were talking about it and you said it was on the fourth floor and I looked up in that last window, and I saw...it looked like a person standing there with white on. But I could just see like shoulders and like a robe or a gown or something. I couldn't see her head or anything. I could just see like a form in the window. And that's what I saw.

Q: Did it move?

Informant M: Yeah. It looked like it moved. And then when we pulled in there [parking lot] when I let you out, I saw it again and it moved. And then I didn't see it again.

Q: And that was on the fourth floor?

Informant M: Yeah, in that last window, in that corner window.

Q: And at the time you said it looked like a human form but you didn't see it move. And what did you think it was? What was your impression?

Informant M: I don't know. I really don't know.

Q: And after you dropped me off, and you went back by, did you look up there again?

Informant M: No. No, I didn't look again because I wasn't really safe, where I could because it was facing Lincoln and I was on Fourth Street so I didn't look back.

Q: Well, that is what I wanted to know. You're input. Thank you.



Informant N  
March 1996  
Effingham, Illinois

Q: What years did you live at Pemberton Hall?

Informant N: '70 and '71.

Q: Ok, and then you lived in the Basement.

Informant N: Uh huh.

Q: Did you ever hear stories about Mary? Did you ever hear about the ghost?

Informant N: I knew about the ghost. Yes. I heard talk about the ghost. There were some girls who lived under her, and said that they heard her, during the night.

Q: What did they hear, do you remember?

Informant N: Walking and Thumping. I don't know, just noises.

Q: Today the residents say they hear music. Did you ever hear that?

Informant N: I don't think I heard about that, anything about the music.

Q: And knocking?

Informant N: Yea, the knocking. Uh huh, I remember that, hearing about that.

Q: Lets talk about actual experience. Were you ever scared or anything. . .

Informant N: No.

Q: Did you ever have an experience with Mary?

Informant N: No.

Q: Did you ever believe the story? Or in ghosts?

Informant N: No, not then I didn't. I knew there was a murder, and I knew the girl's name was Mary, and I knew it was on the fourth floor. I loved the old part of that building and it was beautiful.

Q: Did you live on the old side?

Informant N: No. I didn't. I lived on the new.

Q: Did you know anyone who lived on the old side?

Informant N: Oh, sure. . .sure. When I lived there I was a young child of 18. But you grow and you change, and you know. . .but I believe there is spirits now, and I didn't then. I believe in energy that wasn't there before. You know? I never heard a name of the girl. I don't think I ever heard a name. . .until later. Then, I heard it was Mary. There should be documentation of some sort. Is there? Of a murder there?

Q: No. There is no record of one.

Informant N: Isn't that interesting? Why does it keep coming back?

Q: It seems to come back around at Halloween.

Informant N: Well, sure. . .sure. It is interesting. I just don't know any thing specifically. It is fun. It always used to scare us a little bit!

Q: Well, thank you for your help.

Informant N: Sure. If I think of anything else, I'll tell you. But that is all I remember right now.

Q: You've been a help. Thank you.





Informant O  
April 15, 1998  
Pemberton Hall

Q: What is your actual position here?

Informant O: I am the resident director at Pem Hall

Q: I was wondering if you could tell me about the ghost of Pem Hall. When you heard the story.

Informant O: I actually heard there was a ghost at Pemberton Hall when I applied here at Eastern, because there was a choice between Lawson and Pemberton Hall. When I got my choice, ah, Pemberton. . . when the person who was my hostess, told me there was a ghost in the hall but she didn't really go into much detail. So, that was when I found out. But once I got here, a bunch of different people. . . the person who told me about it is chief Cohanzal, he's the Chief Judicial Officer, of judicial affairs, um it was. . . here on campus. . . it was not too long, a couple of days after I moved in, he was in the building and he came by and introduced himself and um, he asked me if I heard about the ghost. . . he loves to tell stories anyway. . . the rumor is that he has been here since Eastern was founded (laughs). So he told me his version of the story.

Q: what was that version. Can you recount that for me?

Informant O: Um. There are so many, but the one I can remember the most, was Mary Hawkins was the head master, or dorm mother or whatever they used to call them back then of Pem Hall. And there was a student, I guess, on one of the floors who was here over break or something and rumor has it that one of the BSW's . . . Building Service Workers who was deranged and kinda went crazy, and killed the student. How Mary comes into play is that she was the Resident director and I guess she was guilty about not being able to save the student, not being here when tragedy happened or something, so when she died, her ghost came back to the hall to protect those women who lived here, or something like that. Along with that, what I've been told by students, is that Mary. . . Pem used to be divided into two sides, the old side and the new side, because some time ago the additional section was built on to Pem Hall to house more people, because otherwise it is a very small hall.

Rumor has it that Mary doesn't go over to the new side, and you know, bother students because she doesn't know it is there. Because it wasn't built when she was alive, and so when she died, she has no idea there is an additional section to Pemberton Hall. So she can only roam on the old side of the building. That is what I've been told. A couple of students who live on the new side say they have seen her, whatever, but according to students who have been here awhile, residents like seniors, they insist that Mary does not go on the other side of the building.

That is the extent of what my knowledge of the stories. I can't remember any details of the stories I've heard. I've heard alot of them, but those are the details I've heard.

Q: Tells story to Shannel as heard or told to her

Informant O: Okay, that is the other one I've heard. I just couldn't remember the right



progression of it.

Q: That is the one I've heard the most popular. The one you told first, I've told recently.  
Informant O: Oh. Yea.

Q: Also, do you ever relay this story to other people? Students who are coming into the Hall?

Informant O: Students who are thinking about coming into the hall have already heard of Mary. And, um, it is interesting because I've been talking to students I know, joking with them, and saying, "Don't you want to come visit me at Pemberton?" and they say, "Oh, no, no, no! You have a ghost there. . ." or whatever. Um, so, I only relay the story when I'm asked about it, cause when people find out I'm of the Hall and they wanna know. . .I told my parents about it when I heard about it, but, in general I don't necessarily relay the story, but when I'm asked about it, I relay it.

Q: Do you relay the story you told me?

Informant O: No! I tell em what happened to me. This happened when I moved in. I guess one of my RA's were . . .I guess Mary was messing with them. When we opened the hall, we had a hall meeting, and all my students screamed, "I wanna hear what happened to you!" So, I told them.

My office is here, and my apt is across the hall, and the kitchen is actually not in the apt, my kitchen is at the end of the hall. I moved here from the east coast, I moved here from MA and I came in this large U-Haul and tons of boxes. I gave my fiance the task of unpacking the kitchen. . .all the stuff in the kitchen. So, we're unpacking the boxes, and he turns to me sort of startled and he turns to me and says, "Why did you smack me on the butt?" And I look at him and I said, "I didn't smack you on the butt, I'm at the opposite end of the hallway." Laughs. So that is my Mary story, in that Mary smacked him on the butt, cause he swears he felt something, and it wasn't me.

Q: You were out of the room.

Informant O: Yes, and there was no one else in the building.

Q: Do you ever have girls come in and say they saw the ghost?

Informant O: I had a woman who moved out in Sept, because she couldn't live here. She insisted she had incidents happen in her room, and she said it went against her beliefs. . .she's a catholic, I believe, or a very religious person. And you know just the whole thing about spirits. She was saying that when you pass on your spirit goes to another place, and she didn't understand how a spirit could be like kinda roaming the building, like trapped in this world. She was really conflicted with it so we had to move her. I've seen her since and she seems alot happier. She wasn't able to sleep, wasn't doing her studies, but now she is doing fine.

Q: It has been my experience that there is a comraderie among the girls in the hall. I interviewed a group of gals here a few years back, and they felt like Mary was here to protect them.

Informant O: Yes. Oh, yes. And that is how I feel too. When I first heard it I wasn't so sure, but all the stories I hear, Mary is not out to harm anyone. I never feel anything where I should be fretful. I talk to her. . .(Laughs).



Informant P  
June 2 1998  
Charleston, Illinois

Q: What years did you attend EIU

Informant P: I came here, I started in the fall of 1944, and I lived there, in Pem Hall 3 years. On the third floor. In one of the rooms with the corner windows.

Q: You entered EIU at what point in your education? Freshman?

Informant P: Freshman, yes. I've been here every since.

Q: What was your major?

Informant P: Business Education

Q: How many students were housed in Pem Hall

Informant P: I think it was 101, or something like that. See, It was the only dormitory. If you didn't live in Pem, you lived out in houses.

Q: It was the only one on campus?

Informant P: The only one on campus. Fact, Pemberton Hall was the first Dormitory for women in Illinois.

Q: I was aware of that. But I didn't realize that it was the only one as late as the 1930's . . . early 1940's.

Informant P: The new addition of course was not on then, that north end was not on there. They house many more now. Some of those rooms that are nice sized rooms, they've stuck one more in.

Q: Did you live in Charleston, or move from out of the area?

Informant P: I came here from Marshall [Illinois] High School. I lived from West Union, I lived there out on a farm, but I went to Marshall High School.

The last year I lived in Delta Sig house. . . I ran out of money. It was less expensive to live there then.

Q: What was the cost, do you mind my asking? Do you remember?

Informant P: I wish I could remember exactly, but I really can't. I know I had a scholarship in my junior year that was 200.00. . . and that paid my tuition, room and board for a year. Of course it was quarters then, and not semesters, and that paid for the year.

Q: For the whole year?

Informant P: Yes. A year.

Q: Tell me if you can, the original story you heard of Mary Hawkins when you arrived at Pem Hall. Or did you hear it before?

Informant P: Neither. I don't remember that I even heard it at Pem Hall. Because it. . . when I arrived at Pem Hall the maids lived on the fourth floor. I think they call it. I've been through there, when we sang Christmas Carols to the staff, it was a surprise, and we went around the hall. . . the doors were opened to the girls and we went through and sang Carols. I went up there then, but that was the only time we went up there.

Q: Well, when did you hear it?



Informant P: I can't tell you exactly when. I remember maybe, oh, 15 years ago hearing it the first time. It has been a long time since I've been at Pem, about 50 years. . .but I never heard it while I was at Pem Hall.

Q: Can you recap the story for me, as you have heard it?

Informant P: It is really vague to me. There is something about a piano playing up there, and someone was murdered. It is vague to me.

Q: So it was not popular [when you were at Pem Hall]?

Informant P: No it was not popular. It may have been popular before then, I don't know. But it wasn't then.

Q: It has become a little ritual. It is a story to tell the younger girls entering the hall by the upper class people.

Informant P: We had initiation when I was in Pem Hall. Freshmen went through initiation. We sang the Pem Hall song, and when anyone asked we had to do a lot of different things, and we had a . . . in the dining area they had a paddling machine, it sounded like they were, but no one ever got hit, that sort of thing, you know. And everyone had to go through it. The university. . . the college as it was then. . . was very small, my freshman year that was the lowest attendance ever that year, because it was the final year of the war. . . World War II. Sounds like ancient history (Laughs).

Q: How many women were enrolled. . .and what was the [enrollment] ratio of women to men?

Informant P: I think at the beginning of that year, I remember, President Buzzard made a bet with Jim Roberts that he could get thirty five men there. Thirty Five. And he won the bet. He had that many there for awhile. He had a shirt and tie presented at chapel. Well, actually it was an assembly, it wasn't religious thing. . .but there were about 30 men and about three hundred women. So there weren't very many men around. Two of them lived in Pemberton Hall.

Q: Two men?

Informant P: Yes, they lived down under the kitchen area. It was down in the far north west corner.

Q: So even then it was a co-ed dorm?

Informant P: They were not allowed on the floors with the women at all, period. Except like on Sundays when you had to have suitcases carried back, or something like that. But they would always yell, "Man on second!" or "Man on third!" There was no visiting rooms or anything like that.

Q: Not like today.

Informant P: Not at all, no. We didn't lock our doors then. We didn't have to.

Q: Well, thank you very much for your time. This has been great.





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